

MAKING IT NEW: "modernism" in B.E. Baughan's New Zealand  
poetry.

A thesis presented in fulfilment  
of the requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

in the

University of Canterbury

by

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University of Canterbury

1992

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## ABSTRACT.

This thesis examines one woman's attempt at revolution in New Zealand poetry. It will suggest that we may need to re-assess our perception of Blanche Edith Baughan - as a nascent "modern",<sup>1</sup> rather than a "colonial" poet. The generally accepted view is that significant modern poetry emerged in New Zealand in the nineteen-twenties, and came to full flowering in the nineteen-thirties, and that Blanche Baughan was a "forerunner". She has achieved a modest reputation as an innovator in New Zealand poetry, perhaps as our first "true colonial voice".<sup>2</sup> This thesis proposes that Baughan was more than simply a "forerunner", that she had in fact, by 1908, introduced many of the changes currently credited to New Zealand poets of the succeeding generation. The title "Making it New" alludes to the catch-cry of Modernist poetry ("Make it New!") as expressed by Ezra Pound. Although Baughan is in no way connected to the Modernist movement, her directive to creative colonials, "Be thou new!" (from "Maui's Fish") has obvious parallels.<sup>3</sup>

Two major factors account for the difference between Baughan and her New Zealand literary contemporaries - her mysticism and her freedom from the prevailing "Anglophilia". Baughan was reluctantly English at a time when pro-English sentiment was pervasive in both the life and the literature of the colony. This significant pre-condition of her "modernism" has been barely touched on, and the reasons behind it unrecorded, by literary historians and critics. A short biographical background will account for her attitude and reveal some hitherto unpublished facts.

Baughan considered herself a mystic. Her mysticism, her classical education, her interest in philosophy and in social reform, together gave her a

close empathy with the writings of the American Transcendentalists and of Thomas Carlyle. Their influence, which may be traced both in the message, and (occasionally), in the style of her texts, is supported by her possession of personal copies of Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, his *On Heroes*, Emerson's *Essays and Representative Men*, and Walt Whitman's *Democratic Vistas and Other Papers*.<sup>4</sup> The significance of Baughan's transcendentalism - indeed its very existence - has been over-looked by critical comment to date. This thesis views it as a key factor in her empathy with the American Transcendentalists, and flowing from that, it sees in Whitman's "New Worldism" as defined in his "Democratic Vistas", Baughan's main stepping-stone to "modernism".

Accounting for Baughan's markedly different outlook and its effect on the matter and method of her poems required the inclusion in this thesis of four inter-related themes: her biographical past; her mysticism; her education (in the broadest sense, including the influences, particularly of the American Transcendentalists, on her poetic thought); and, finally, her conversion of transcendentalist concepts and precepts to the "modern" elements in her work.

The thesis is organized in two related halves. Part A (chapters one to three), deals with the influences on her work. It includes, as well, an examination, from hindsight, of Baughan's "modernism" in relation to that of the main New Zealand poets of the nineteen-twenties and thirties. Part B (chapters four to eight), consists of an exploratory study of her major poetic texts, the five very long works I have termed "colonial allegories": "Shingle-Short", "A Bush Section", "Maui's Fish", "Burnt Bush" and "The Paddock". In Part B, I will seek out the poems' transcendentalist underpinning, their debunking of "Anglophilia" - and of conservative attitudes in general - and the practical spinoffs of Baughan's emphasis on change and newness at the

level of the text. This study is confined to the allegories. Baughan's other works, whether in poetry or prose, are mentioned only where necessary either to illustrate her development or to clarify some point in the thesis.

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## Notes.

<sup>1</sup>Baughan was modern for her time. She was not of course Modernist. Nevertheless, some of her innovations, though not deriving from the Modernist movement, have characteristics in common with it - her attempts at "open form", for instance, and her use of demotic expression. Unless otherwise specified, the term "modern" as it applies to Baughan's work, means comparatively modern. It means that it contains characteristics associated with poetry of recent times, not expected in Victorian/Edwardian poetry. I will retain inverted commas where the word applies to Baughan's work, to avoid confusion with other meanings and connotations.

<sup>2</sup> P. C. M. Alcock uses the phrase in "A true colonial voice: Blanche Edith Baughan" *Landfall*, CCII [June 1972], p. 164. A few paragraphs in E. H. McCormick's *Letters and Art in New Zealand* (Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1940) appear to be the first (muted) public recognition of Baughan's contribution since the initial small wave of enthusiasm nearly thirty years earlier. (McCormick notes her "frontal attack on the special problems of New Zealand verse", for which strategy he finds "no parallel" amongst her New Zealand-born contemporaries (p. 104). Six years later, in *Creative Writing in New Zealand* (Auckland: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1946), J. C. Reid writes of her "[refusal] to be bound by the rather sterile forms of Edwardian Verse". He comments on her "rather sophisticated attempt to use the native New Zealand idiom for literary purposes" (p.19). In 1960 Allen Curnow describes Baughan's "A Bush Section" as "the best New Zealand poem before Mason" (*The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse*, Penguin (N.Z.) Limited, 1960), p. 38. Vincent O'Sullivan sees Baughan in a precursory role. In the introduction to *An Anthology of New Zealand Poetry* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p.33, he writes, "With the exception of Blanche Baughan, no poet before the First World War looked squarely at what was done, thought, and felt, in the full context of colonial or early Dominion life". Ian Wedde considers that "it is with Blanche Baughan that we first sense the beginnings of the internal relation of where to the language of the poems" ("Introduction", *The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse* Auckland: Penguin Books (N.Z.) Limited, 1985), p. 33. Patrick Evans writes, "she was the only poet in New Zealand to challenge the language of Victorian Romanticism that seemed obligatory in the long period till the Great War . . ." (*The Penguin History of New Zealand Literature* Auckland: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 50. (Of course there were brickbats as well. P. A. Lawlor, for instance, lumps Baughan along with her contemporary, Hubert Church, and the eminently forgettable Ferguson, in a dismissive phrase, "Leaving aside the B.E. Baughans, Hubert Churchs and Dougald Fergusons . . ." in *Books and Bookmen* (Wellington: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1954), p. 93.

<sup>3</sup>It is ironical, but significant, that Baughan couches her call for newness in the archaic second person singular. "Be thou new!" concisely sums up the dilemma of her situation, for she is both aware of the need for change, and yet, despite some surprising innovations, is unwilling to divest her own work of poetic conventions and archaisms.

<sup>4</sup>I am indebted to Mrs Betty Waller (Christchurch) for the loan of these books. For publication details, see appendix, pp. 257-258.

## **Acknowledgements.**

Special thanks are due to Dr R. Jackaman and Dr P. Evans for their assistance. I am grateful too to Mrs Betty Waller, Mrs Gwen Goodwin, Mrs M. A. Skey, and to the many others, too numerous to mention separately, who wrote letters or who otherwise offered information concerning B. E. Baughan, or who shared personal memories of her. Thanks too, to my partner, Brian, for his cheerful support, and to my son, Rick, whose computing skills saved the day on many occasions.



## CHAPTER ONE: THE BIOGRAPHICAL FACTOR.

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### (i) Early years in England.

Baughan's background was not simply "different" from those of her colonial contemporaries, both English and New-Zealand-born; it was *extraordinarily* different. Blanche Edith Baughan (1870 - 1958), the youngest of six children, was born into a comfortable middle class family in Putney, London. (The only extant portrait of her as a young woman is reproduced on the previous page<sup>1</sup>). We may trace her progress through her four residential addresses, each removal being occasioned by a particularly traumatic event in her background.

Blanche spent her early childhood in the substantial Victorian residence, "Lime Villa", in Upper Richmond Road. Her father, John Baughan, of Welsh extraction, was a London stockbroker and a successful one, apparently. Governesses saw to Blanche's early education.<sup>2</sup> Her father died when Blanche was ten years old, leaving his widow, his son, and each of his four daughters provided with a modest income for life. His death certificate gives his occupation as "Gentleman".<sup>3</sup> Details from the 1871 census for Putney tell us that Baughan's father came from Gloucester, her mother from Warwick. The



children are listed as Kate (9 years); Amy, (8); Emily (6); John, (4); Minnie, (3); and Blanche Edith (1). The three elder children were born in Fulham, the younger three in Putney.

It appears that a family scandal, occurring some time between 1903 and 1906, was an incentive prompting the family's removal from "Lime Villa" in Putney to 74 Montpellier Road, Brighton.<sup>4</sup> Baughan's maternal grandfather had been committed to Broadmoor prison for an act of insane homicide. Several years later, in 1880, 74 Montpellier Road was the setting for an even more traumatic event. Her grandfather's insanity seems to have been an hereditary condition, for her mother, too, became similarly affected. Blanche was ten years old when her much loved father died, apparently as a result of a homicidal attack by her mother.<sup>5</sup> Her mother was henceforth an invalid, in the care of her family. Baughan kept this part of her background very much to herself. Her closest friend, Berta Burns, alludes to it in her reference to "some tragic happenings in their family life" ("Notes", p. 2), but reveals no details. Mrs Burns adds that the "relevant disclosures" had been put into safe keeping until that branch of the family had died out. At the time of compiling her notes (1958), she reports that its sole surviving member was Miss Diana Baughan, the only child of Baughan's one brother, John, and that this niece was then an elderly and crippled spinster. No living relative could be contacted in England (or elsewhere) at the time of writing this thesis.

In her published work or extant correspondence, Baughan makes no direct reference to the tragic episodes in her background. However, her unpublished novel manuscript (*Two New Zealand Roses*, 1946), written when she was seventy-six, gives the impression of an exercise in exorcism of hitherto suppressed dark secrets, a confessional, rather than a literary work intended for publication. Its main relevance to this thesis lies in its many

parallels with known facts. In the manuscript, Baughan splits herself biographically between the two central characters - Rose, who sees herself as a failed poet and who eventually gives over her life to social work; and Rosamond, who survives a family tragedy similar to Baughan's and who has a university education, but abandons it to go nursing in London. Of course one cannot take a nominally fictive work as factual; but where the source of the scene is patently obvious, her comments may flesh out the very sparse first-hand material concerning her early years, and perhaps add to an understanding of the person behind the poems. For instance, we may at least have an oblique comment on the tragedy and its effect on her childhood and get an impression of her well-remembered horror of the occasion behind young "Rosamond's" memory of "that shocking day after the funeral, when she herself, Rosamond, had to go back to school, and that hideous Harky had asked her how it felt to have a pair of murderers for your father and mother" (p. 274). Another passage suggests the origin of Baughan's self-imposed silence on the subject:

No, she - Rosamond stopped then. Not even to Rosy had she ever spoken of that pact between Aunty and herself, the night of Papa's death. Not even to Aunty herself after that one night. They had both just taken it for granted, sacred beyond speech and rooted as the rocks (p. 175).

It is very probable that Blanche's eldest sisters Kate, aged eighteen at the time of the tragedy, and Amy, then aged 17, became mother substitutes for their youngest sister. In the chapter "Chasm" ( *Two New Zealand Roses*, pp. 128-35), Amy is a young aunt. After the tragedy Amy explains to the shattered 10-year-old that they must never marry and have children for fear of passing on the family "weakness". They agree that, instead, they will be "everybody's aunties" (p. 135). In real life, Baughan became indeed "everybody's aunty" - in

fact "Aunt Betty" is the name used for Baughan by most of those whom I contacted who had known her as children. The "Miss K. Baughan", who is recorded in the London University registry as Blanche Baughan's guardian during her undergraduate period (1888-1891), is very likely her eldest sister Kate. It is probably no coincidence that another persona character, the rebellious teenager, Janet (in "The Paddock"), is an orphan in the care of her older "mother-sister". Baughan attended the Brighton high school, where, at age fifteen, she won a scholarship which took her to Royal Holloway College.<sup>6</sup> There is something of a mystery surrounding an incident in Baughan's life at about this time. Berta Burns omits it from her outline biography, but her son David claims to have got the story from her, although he makes the qualifying remark that although his mother's version "would almost certainly have some basis in fact" it could be "possibly unavoidably enhanced in the telling".<sup>7</sup> The incident as reported suggests that the young Miss Baughan had been sent to a finishing school in Switzerland, but that she had fallen in love and run off with the bear-trainer in a travelling circus, and had been pursued and returned to her home by members of her family.<sup>8</sup> Her collection of bear ornaments is possibly a clue. Virtually all of those interviewed who had known Baughan ("Aunt Betty") as children, remembered her intriguing cupboard of trinkets and knick-knacks, all souvenirs of her travels. Several commented on her collection of little performing bear figurines. Some showed me their little bear souvenirs (gifts from "Aunt Betty's cupboard"), which several associated with the elopement incident (See appendix, p. 259). The most likely date for this episode appears to be shortly before her admission to The Royal Holloway College in 1887.

Baughan was one of the first women to attend The Royal Holloway when it opened to students (studying for University of London Degrees) in 1887. She was admitted in October of that year at the age of seventeen. College

records show her to have been a very distinguished student: she was awarded an Entrance Scholarship in 1887 of 30 pounds for three years. In 1889 she won the Founder's Scholarship of 30 pounds for two years and the Driver Prize for Latin and Divinity. In 1890 she again won the Driver Prize for Latin, and in 1891, for Greek. She left Royal Holloway College in December 1891 having gained the first First Class Honours degree (B.A.) in Classics awarded to the college.<sup>9</sup>

## (ii) Post University in England: 1891 - 1900.

Soon after graduating, Baughan became involved in social work in the slums of Shoreditch and Hoxton, in East London. It is possible that this work was connected with the Southwark Settlement, undertaken by a charity organization and supported by the College, in which some of the students did voluntary social work, especially centring on improving the lot of working women in the locality. Baughan herself refers to it as "Settlement work" which supports the suggestion that it was indeed the Southwark Settlement scheme.<sup>10</sup> According to the Royal Holloway archivist, quite a number of such schemes were supported by various womens' colleges at this time.<sup>11</sup>

Baughan was shocked by the appalling conditions she encountered in the slums. Of this period she writes, "My experiences there made me agree with Shelley that Hell is a city very much like London".<sup>12</sup> It is a reasonable supposition that a scene from *Two New Zealand Roses* is based on her social work experience in East London. Her persona/protagonist, Rosamond (formerly a university student), has gone nursing in the London slums. We perhaps get some idea of the shock effect on Baughan herself of the miseries she encountered there, when she has her semi-autobiographical Rosamond recall details such as, "all the pain and dirt and squalor . . . like only a frying-

pan to wash a new-born baby in; I remember how that shocked me!"(p. 228). Even so, her irrepressible optimism was already established. An expression, dating apparently to this period of her life, has been quoted by several who remember her: "Beauty's as undeniable as pain in this world, and don't you ever forget it!"<sup>13</sup>

Baughan's optimism was soon again sorely tested, this time by the death of her sister from tuberculosis. After the death of Emily, the family moved to another Brighton address, 15 Buckingham Road. Before the completion of Baughan's undergraduate days, the College registry records a new home address for her: 4 Vale Terrace, Guildford, Surrey, at which address Baughan was to take over from her sisters, the nursing of their ailing and insane mother.

Family finances were such that Baughan was able to undertake a world trip in 1893, before returning to nurse her mother through the last seven years of her life.<sup>14</sup> Berta Burns tells us that Baughan travelled to "Germany, India, Africa, Sweden, Norway, Switzerland, America, and later, Australia and New Zealand" ("Notes", p. 2), but it is not clear from Burns' notes which of these countries were included on this particular (1893) itinerary, for Baughan made several trips overseas after settling in this country.<sup>15</sup> However, it seems that this trip gave her a brief preliminary impression of Zealand when her ship called here *en route* to England, via Africa, in "about 1893" ("Notes", p. 2).

According to Burns, this same sea voyage was the setting for an unrequited romance between Baughan and a fellow passenger (Jeffrey). The affair was terminated, apparently, by Baughan herself, for fear of transmitting the family "weakness" to the next generation.<sup>16</sup> Some idea of the intensity of emotional stress resulting from this affair - and the tragedy involving her

mother - is suggested by the discovery that decades later, in 1913 (when Baughan had become attracted to Vedanta teachings), she travelled to California and unburdened her secrets to a Hindu Swami of the Vedanta sect: "I told him about Mother and Jeffrey", she writes.<sup>17</sup>

Much of her spare time between 1893 and 1898 was spent writing the poems that were collected in her first volume, *Verses*, (Westminster: Constable, 1898). Apparently it was well received ("Notes", p. 1). Most critics assumed "B. E. Baughan" to be male, which must have delighted her, for the masculine-sounding initials-plus-surname was a deliberate ploy to avoid male-biased prejudice. Critical comment such as the English *Morning Post's* "If Mr Baughan can fulfil the promise shown, he may make for himself a name in literature . . . undoubted genius . . . May do great things"<sup>18</sup> seemed to justify her choice of signature.

From 1894 family duties kept Baughan in Guildford, in Surrey. There was at least one enjoyable aspect of this period, the consolation of Surrey in springtime. One of Baughan's very few regrets on leaving her home country was the loss of the Surrey rural scene: "O my lost primroses & cowslips & swallows!".<sup>19</sup>

It seems that Baughan had some assistance with her home nursing duties, or at least some relief, for she was able to undertake a position teaching Greek to Adeline, Duchess of Bedford, and to some of her friends.<sup>20</sup> The lessons, apparently, were suggested by the Duchess (then in her late forties), as a new interest to help her cope with her widowhood (appendix, p. 257). The current Duke of Bedford has no information about this, but confirms that the date, late nineteenth century, would fit the commencement of the duchess's widowhood. He points out that after her husband's death, Adeline lived at

Woodside House in Buckinghamshire, "where we Russells had some land and have been buried for some hundreds of years".<sup>21</sup> He wonders if Miss Baughan lived nearby. In fact she lived in the neighbouring county.

Whatever the details of the situation, Baughan's brief association with the aristocracy at a time when the memory of the East London slums was still vivid in her mind, gave her a sharp impression of the extremities of British society, what D'Israeli had called "the Two Englands". She came down firmly in favour of the poor.<sup>22</sup> Baughan's concern for the underdogs of society included a strong (and life-long) concern for women's rights.<sup>23</sup> Mrs Burns tells us that Baughan "was active in the Suffragette Movement" (appendix, p. 256 and "Notes", p. 3), and that she had had to overcome some family opposition to her enrolment at university (p. 1). This opposition seems to have fueled her determination to fight this aspect of prejudice as well. Apparently Baughan, along with a group of like-minded graduates from London University, was a regular participant at protests at the sites of prejudice against female higher education, such as Cambridge University. One such incident occurred at Cambridge on 21/5/1897 when the Senate House was known to be voting on the issue of conferring degrees on women. Her party arrived prepared with flour-bags and painted slogans. The anti-feminist Cambridge students were like-wise prepared, and advertised their bias with a larger-than-life effigy of a male chauvinist's version of a female student. The proposal was rejected. A lively scuffle ensued. Baughan kept a cutting from the London *Spectator* describing the incident.<sup>24</sup>

After her mother's death in 1900, Baughan was free to choose her location. She chose New Zealand, and arrived here late in the same year. It is hardly surprising that the pro-England sentiment that infuses much colonial writing is noticeably absent in her New Zealand work. "I never was English

by anything but accident", she once wrote, "and rejoice to be taken for 'a Colonial' in England or out of it".<sup>25</sup> Quite simply, she had seen too much of the grim social reality of her homeland to retain a sentimental Old World nostalgia. Besides, she had already travelled extensively by this time, and realized the mind-broadening benefits of world travel. In the letter from which the quotation above is taken, she writes to her young Australian correspondent (who is about to travel to England to attend London University), "Little they know of (Australia) who only (Australia) know"<sup>26</sup> (her emphasis).

### (iii) New Zealand: (a) Early Years.

When Baughan arrived in New Zealand in 1900 she disembarked at Wellington. "I knew nobody in New Zealand", she writes. Not surprisingly, Baughan's gregarious nature soon brought her into contact with "friends of friends" who, apparently, were farming at Ormondville (about 30 km. north-west of Dannevirke, in Hawke's Bay), and "took [her] in hand", arranging for her to help with the housework in return for her keep. She had no aptitude whatever for domesticity, and, according to Burns, had yet to learn how to boil eggs!<sup>27</sup> However, the "friends of friends" managed to teach her at least the rudiments of housework and cooking, and Baughan took great pride in her small successes: "it was a proud moment", she writes, "when I saw a family of children, eating, without critical remarks, porridge I had cooked".<sup>28</sup>

The subject for one of her earliest attempts at a New Zealand-oriented poem, "Shingle-Short", is based on the rather simple youth employed as cow-hand and general rouseabout at the Ormondville station. "We used to meet in the kitchen. He loved a listener, & I loved listening, so - !" <sup>29</sup> One of her prose sketches, "An Early Morning Walk" in *Brown Bread from a Colonial*





*Oven*,<sup>30</sup>) concerning a young woman's time out from her house-keeping chores on a New Zealand farm, appears, likewise, to capitalize on her Ormondville experience.

Just what events brought Baughan in 1902 from Ormondville to Chorlton, a tiny, isolated settlement on Banks Peninsula, is not known. Berta Burns tells us that when Baughan first visited the Peninsula, she was so impressed with the splendid view from the promontory (Panau, known locally as "The Long Look-out"), she simply called at a farm house and asked if she might rent a room, explaining, apparently, that she had simple tastes and that she would be no bother ("Notes", p. 3). She was accepted, and there she lived until 1910 or possibly, 1911. It was there that *Shingle-Short* and *Brown Bread from a Colonial Oven* were written. In her *Brown Bread* story, "The Old Kitchen" (p. 189), Baughan appears to write herself into the story in her description of the arrival of the mysterious spinster, "Miss Kirkaldie", at a farm cottage located "out towards the tip of a certain bare, seaward-stretching promontory":

The farm, high as it stands, and bare to the air and light . . . dwells in a kind of retirement of its own. There is no road leading to it, for one thing - only a rough track across the tussock . . . It was with more surprise, therefore, that Mrs Callendar, one wet June morning, found herself confronted on the doorstep, among the winter violets, by a stranger, a lady; come, of all extraordinary errands, to enquire whether Mrs Callendar would not take her in to board! She was all alone and wished for quiet lodging.

In fact the farm house was the home of the Hunter family. Until she moved to Clifton about a decade later, Baughan lived there with Mrs Mary Ann Hunter, and later when Mrs Hunter shifted to the North Island, with the son and daughter-in-law. Burns describes the cottage [and the Chorlton people] as "simple and wholesome" - the photograph [opposite] speaks for

itself.<sup>31</sup> In Baughan's sketch "The Old Kitchen", the farm cottage is used occasionally as a meeting-place for a local drama group. This appears to be based on fact. Baughan mentions her "Chorlton Dramatic rehearsals" in a letter to J. C. Andersen (9/8/1908). Several of those interviewed recalled "Aunt Betty's" drama/poetry-reading evenings, both at Chorlton and at her cottage at Clifton (see appendix, pp. 254, 255, and 260). A seemingly-trivial anecdote concerning one of her Chorlton "evenings" is interesting in that it suggests her familiarity with the German philosopher, Hegel (a significant influence on her work), or at least with his characteristic long-windedness. The interviewee remembered being taken, as a child, to one such cultural evening (appendix, p. 261). On this occasion, several German visitors joined the gathering. They had with them a parrot, which babbled excitedly in German, and which they introduced as Herr Hegel. Apparently, Baughan had the gathering prostrate with laughter by holding a mock philosophical debate with the parrot. Another anecdote concerning Baughan's cultural "evenings" is possibly of some literary import, for it backs up an aspect significant to her work - her interest in Walt Whitman. A younger contemporary remembers Baughan ("Aunt Betty") holding poetry-readings at their home in Sumner. Her only clear recollection of these occasions was that when Walt Whitman was to be read, the children present were shoo'd out of the room!<sup>32</sup>

Baughan was too extroverted a person to be isolated, even in Chorlton. She describes Mr and Mrs Boleyn of nearby Stoney Bay as "Very good and dear friends". She became good friends with the local school-teacher, Miss Duncan,<sup>33</sup> and actively encouraged writing talent at the school by offering prizes for the best essay on given topics.<sup>34</sup> Another close friend of her Chorlton days was a Miss Alice Cabot, who at the time was companion-help to a Miss Menzies.<sup>35</sup> The versifying Cabot sisters were friends of Jessie Mackay (In 1906 Jessie Mackay took over from Dolce Cabot as "Women's Page" editor

on the *Canterbury Times* ). It was the literary editor of *The Lyttelton Times*, Mr S. Saunders, who first put Baughan in touch with Jessie Mackay, J. C. Andersen and other local writers.<sup>36</sup> Her friendship with Jessie Mackay was significant during her production of the *Shingle-Short* poems. The intimate nature of some of the allusions in "The Eternal Children", the long poem in that volume (pp. 117-37) addressed "To Jessie Mackay", suggests that their friendship was a close one. They had much in common: both were poets, both were enthusiasts for an indigenous culture, both took an active interest in social causes, both were feminists, both were intensely religious - though in different ways - and both were unmarried. Miss Mackay was the elder by six years. In the preface to *Shingle-Short* Baughan records her "deep gratitude to several generous and helpful critics": the first named is Jessie Mackay.

Baughan soon became involved in trying to improve the lot of local writers. She and Mackay plotted to boycott contributing to newspapers and periodicals which had a policy of non-payment for literary contributions. Baughan, who had been paid generously for her contributions to English periodicals, especially the London *Spectator*, resented what she saw as the meanness of New Zealand publishers. Most newspapers and periodicals paid not at all, and some publishing houses - including Whitcombe and Tombs, her New Zealand publisher - paid little. When sales for *Shingle-Short* appeared to be going well, she decided to take advantage of the situation to force a change. She wrote to her fellow writer J. C. Andersen (9/8/1908), "Mr Whitcombe has just written to tell me that [*Shingle-Short* ] is likely to sell quite out". Baughan sought recruitments for the cause. She explained her strategy to Andersen:

Another matter. If Sh. Sh. [*Shingle Short*] sells out, will you join me in a strike? Miss Mackay has already: we have resolved to allow nothing of ours to be printed without pay. If you will join, I should

like, rather, to let some of our editors know this - or rather their syndicates: pointing out that by not paying for verse they are doubly damaging the national literature - they are (1) obliging us to send our exquisite productions to England forsooth! & Australie [sic.] & (2) they print doggerel, since they needn't pay for it. Why we should fill their columns for nothing, I do not see. . . .

Baughan was still bearing a grudge against *The Canterbury Times* for some poems she had sent, for which she had expected payment. She continues to Andersen:

'Gathering Peaches' and 'Early Days' were both a handsome present to the C. Times (sic.) on my part: very handsome too, since for 3 verses that were the nucleus of E.D. the London Spectator had given me half a guinea a verse: and quite involuntary, since I didn't know the C.T. custom.

She learned from experience though, as she explains: "When the *Weekly Press* editor wrote and asked for something for the Xmas No. I replied with my views full set out - result? a very agreeable cheque". However, she does not appear to have had much success with Whitcombe and Tombs in this matter. For the years of work involved in the production of her prose sketches *Brown Bread From a Colonial Oven*, she was paid only five pounds - for the whole edition ("Notes", p. 4).

In the same year that her *Shingle-Short* volume was published (1908), Baughan began writing the first of her essays on New Zealand scenery for the *London Spectator*.<sup>37</sup> Baughan went to considerable trouble to acquire first-hand knowledge of her subjects. Her knowledge of native flora and fauna, which is apparent in her scenic essays, was acquired on extensive excursions. Baughan's knowledge of Maoritanga, evident, for instance, in Hine's long monologue in "The Paddock", was absorbed through conversations with an elderly Maori woman on the Peninsula (appendix, p. 261) and aided by some advice from a pakeha expert in the field, J. Cowan, who had been brought up

amongst Maori. Baughan writes that he "nobly looked over [Hine's soliloquy] for me"(letter to J. C. Andersen, Aug. 9. 1908). Andersen too, was by now regarded as an "expert" in Maoritanga, having published an extensive work (675 pages), *Maori Life in Ao-tea* [sic.] (Whitcombe and Tombs, 1907). He was sympathetic as well to Baughan's idealist leanings, since he too was *au fait* with the German idealists. Andersen was a competent translator of German and became involved in translating Schiller's poetry and also Heine's.<sup>38</sup>

### (b) Mysticism.

"Am I a Christian? No church would have me! Christ would!" wrote Baughan to J. C. Andersen.<sup>39</sup> In the same letter she said "I am definitely a mystic". Her claims to be a mystic are based on two psychic experiences, the first taking place in Chorlton in 1905 when she was thirty-five. This 1905 incident is included in Dr Winslow Hall's *Recorded Illuminates*: in her own words,

... on April 13, 1905 at eight a.m. I was standing among pine trees looking out at the sky when suddenly the heavens opened, as it were, and caught me up. I was swept up and out of myself altogether into a flood of white glory. I had no sense of time or place. The ecstasy was terrific while it lasted. It could have lasted only a minute or two. I found myself bathed with tears, but they were tears of joy. I knew I felt *one* with everything and everybody; and somehow I knew that what I had experienced was reality, and that reality is perfection. I would like to add that no words seem to me able to convey a thousandth part of the depth of reality of that experience, even so far as my own taste of it has gone. I fancy all one's normal faculties are fused and transcended.<sup>40</sup>

In that one moment Baughan seems to have become reconciled to her own dark secret, seeing it in total perspective. Immediately after the experience, she jotted down this spontaneous, rough, but significant verse:<sup>41</sup>

Breathed through by the winds, and in league  
     with the stones of the field,  
 From the light of the stars and the sun  
 Unexcluded, unsealed -  
 Out of all elements formed, to all  
     elements kin,  
 Dark with the dye of Humanity's  
     sorrow and sin,  
 Mate of the murderer and murdered,  
     with foul and forlorn  
 One substance, and yet of one  
     being with Being unborn, -  
 Ready roadway to every experience  
     encountering me -  
 In secret united, delighted, with all that I see -  
 Creature of circumstance,  
     creature of self,  
     ever creature of God . . .

Baughan had been brought up an Anglican. Her mother had been deeply religious. However, by adolescence Baughan had rejected the church and traditional Christian beliefs. In her own words, "I, myself have never been able to accept dogmatic Christianity since girlhood, when I lost all faith in it with a consequent agony indescribable. Nature, however, has always been my Angel. I suppose I was a 'nature - mystic' without knowing it, though agnostic in many respects".<sup>42</sup> After her first transcendental experience, which left her with an overwhelming sense of "Oneness", it was an easy step to accept Vedanta teachings, or at least their central belief in the essential oneness of all things.<sup>43</sup> Baughan writes in her *Recorded Illuminates* article that some years after her mystic enlightenment, a "spiritual longing in me grew intense and sent me wandering in California in search of more knowledge, though I knew not where it might be awaiting me" (p.104). Apparently, from her ecstatic reaction to her meeting with Swami Prajnananda she found it there.<sup>44</sup> Twenty years later Baughan experienced a second "illuminatory experience".

It is recorded in *Watcher on the Hills* by Raynor Johnson, D. Sc. (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1959), pp. 57, ff. In Baughan's words:

Though the time occupied in it seemed quite long, my attention was instantly occupied by what seemed a point of bright light, within me, yet beyond me. It was like a diamond or a star, very bright and very peaceful, very secure. My feeling was as though the point of white light addressed me saying: 'Don't be frightened even if your body is completely broken. I am safe, and I am all that matters'. I do not mean that there were any words, but this was the sense.

In retrospect, considering her description of the earlier "illumination", it seems that by 1905, when Baughan was engaged on her most significant poems, the writing was already clearly on the wall that her future lay in social work (although she herself did not realize this at the time), and in view of her "mate of the murderer" impression in her spontaneous verses, specifically with penal reform. As well, the intensity of the experience made her conscious of the inadequacy of words, a fact which helped her, eventually, to accept her change of direction. Years later she wrote to anthologist W. F. Alexander, "you have no idea how I have lost the use of words even - or how they now bore me!! Clumsy method of communication, eh?" (her emphases).<sup>45</sup> When Sir Joseph Kinsey wrote (in 1934) asking for details of her books on New Zealand scenery, Baughan supplied some details, but added, "I find myself, as I write, being un-kindly reminded that: Books? - 'tis an [sic.] dull and endless strife!" but kindly

Come, hear the woodland linnet,  
How sweet his music!  
on my life,  
There's more of wisdom in it!

She adds, "Not having a linnet handy, I hear the woodland Tui- and thankfully agree!! What do you think about that?" (her emphases).



Baughan's literary phase was short-lived - as far as her poetry writing was concerned, barely a decade. It was generally assumed that she had "sacrificed poetry to prisoners". When W. F. Alexander used this expression, Baughan hastened to put him right:

. . . O dear! Don't you subscribe to the absurd idea that B.E.B. 'Sacrificed Poetry to Prisoners'! Nothing of the kind - the poor woman never abandoned Poetry: Poetry forsook her . . . even before the war! . . . It didn't, mercifully, deprive her of the love of Beauty, though: or of the perception that the unseen Beauty can, & should rule all our destinies, & can be served in all sorts of ways - here she has remained deeply at one with Shelley, Plato, & whoever wrote the upanishads [sic]. . . & that conviction is responsible for her transactions with prisoners. . . .

(Letter to Alexander, 20/3/1937. W. F. Alexander MS Papers 473,Wtu.)

### (c) Writing after *Shingle-Short*.

Her talent, she tells us, had deserted her "even before the war", and it had been dwindling for some time before its final evaporation. In 1913, however, she had not yet abandoned hope. She wrote to W. F. Alexander, "I have a volume [of new verse] in hand now, but don't know when it will see the light".<sup>46</sup> In fact it was not published until 1923, under the title of *Poems from the Port Hills*. Alas, most of the work in this slim volume supports Baughan's own opinion that her poetic powers had declined.<sup>47</sup>

Before she arrived at her acceptance of the evaporation of her talent, Baughan went through a period of severe awareness of loss. On this, she wrote to Alexander, "The loss of a husband & ten children would have bereaved her [sic.] less, believe me!"<sup>48</sup>



However, she continued with her commission to produce a series of booklets on New Zealand scenery. The essays were preceded by extensive walking and alpine climbing trips throughout New Zealand. The only extant photo of Baughan engaged in these activities is printed opposite.<sup>49</sup> Baughan's interest in natural history put her in touch with the botanists Robert Laing<sup>50</sup> and Leonard Cockayne.

The first of these prose studies, the "Finest Walk in The World", "Snow Kings of the Southern Alps" and "A River of Pictures and Peace" originated as articles in the London *Spectator* (the first appeared in Sept 12, 1908, pp. 359 - 360) - although the versions included in her volume *Studies in New Zealand Scenery* considerably enlarge on the originals. The style appears to be chosen with her English audience in mind. It is virtually Ruskin's - Ruskin in his early, flamboyant and sentimental phase, the style of his *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, for instance. This is hardly surprising. Ruskin's voluptuous enthusiasms about the mountain scenery recorded during his many long journeys through France, Switzerland and Italy were considered by many to be the epitome of descriptive writing.<sup>51</sup> Baughan was a great admirer of Ruskin - of Ruskin the humanitarian as well as Ruskin the disciple of beauty. Indeed she knew Ruskin personally, having spent some time in the Lake District, near Brantwood, in the late nineteenth century, where, apparently, she met and had some long conversations with the then elderly sage (see appendix, p. 256).

Baughan's next literary venture took her briefly into the field of prose fiction. Perhaps the Sydney *Bulletin* Red Page critic (June 4, 1908) was influential in persuading Baughan to attempt fiction. He had concluded his review of *Shingle-Short* with something of a challenge. Recognizing her talent for characterization, he strongly advised her to produce a novel.

Baughan produced instead her book of prose sketches, *Brown Bread in a Colonial Oven* (1912). The quality of these vignettes is uneven. At least several of them are worthy of preservation as extensions of Baughan's push for literary change in New Zealand.<sup>52</sup>

Soon after the publication of *Brown Bread*, Baughan felt a need to seek further into things of the spirit. Her holistic perspective, reinforced, she claims, by her mystical experience, was to find close empathy with the holistic teachings of the Vedanta. She travelled to California to the Vedanta centres and became a life-long convert to that philosophy.

### **Social Work.**

Baughan returned to New Zealand from California in 1917. It is ironic that at about the time she was writing the last of her essays on New Zealand scenery, "Akaroa", which contains some loyal sentiments about "the brave blood of Akaroa " being "spilt without grudge in the far gullies of Gallipoli" (*Glimpses of New Zealand Scenery*, p. 320), the rumour spread about that she was in fact a German spy.<sup>53</sup> Perhaps the fact that she could speak German<sup>54</sup> helped fuel the story. It was thought she could send signals to German ships at Lyttelton from her cottage right at the top of Clifton Spur ("Notes", p. 5). In that year, and in 1918, when the great influenza epidemic was at its height, Baughan spent much time in voluntary nursing service, and this, she believed, helped to remove the unjustified suspicion attaching to her.<sup>55</sup> Baughan, it seems, exchanged her role of nurse for that of patient, possibly at about this date. Apparently she contracted tuberculosis, and was nursed back to health by her friend Berta Burns.<sup>56</sup>

"I regard social service as an art, you know: and my contribution to society is still to try & educe Beauty from Ashes" wrote Baughan in 1937 (her emphases).<sup>57</sup> From 1920 she experienced "one increasing purpose" in life: a more humane and effective treatment of prisoners and society's misfits ("Notes", p. 8). A personal interest in two particular prisoners initiated this interest.<sup>58</sup> In 1921 she became an official prison visitor at Halswell Point prison in Wellington. "The chief part of my work" she said in a 1924 interview, "is character-building, by means of correspondence".<sup>59</sup> "What is needed", she adds, "is individual shepherding of each black sheep . . . My own 'class' numbers about fifty, irrespective of those on the spot. I have boys, girls, men, women, drunkards, murderers, thieves and forgers, and can honestly say that I find good in them all . . . They write to me as 'Friend', and I'm glad and proud of the title".

An article in the London *Spectator* concerning the activities of the British Howard League for Penal Reform inspired her, in 1924, to help form a New Zealand branch, for there was much room for improvement in the country's penal system. Indeed the appalling conditions, seen at first hand, came as something of a shock, as her comment to J. C. Andersen suggests: "I've never forgotten how good you were in putting me up, during my dazed first incursions into prisons".<sup>60</sup> Later she became official prisoner visitor at Addington Women's Prison, in Christchurch, but resigned in 1926 in protest at injustices and inefficiencies of the New Zealand penal system. Nevertheless, she persisted with her first-hand study of both male and female prisoners for about ten years, from 1930 - 40, and recorded her successes and failures in a small volume, *People in Prison*.<sup>61</sup> The whole edition (500 copies), written with the help of F. A. de la Mare, was printed and circulated at her expense, to those in authority who might be influenced.<sup>62</sup> In 1935 Baughan received the King George V Jubilee Medal for her literary and social services.

When Baughan moved house from Clifton to Akaroa in 1930, she had built, high on Selwyn Avenue, a cottage offering a splendid view of the harbour and surrounding hills. She called the cottage "Ashrama" (a place of peace). There she frequently gave shelter to ex-prisoners and others on the fringe of society. There is a close parallel with a similarly described cottage in *Two New Zealand Roses*, called "The Haven", where such visitors are described as "Vessels that put into the Haven for repairs" (p.334). Her means of assistance sometimes took refreshingly original form. Alan Mulgan tells this delightful story of a meeting with Baughan:

My wife and she met by chance one night travelling to Auckland on the limited, I think early in 1918. They sat together in a crowded second-class carriage and talked intermittently through the night. It seemed that Miss Baughan had come up from Christchurch (at her own expense, one must assume) to follow the case of an oft-convicted prisoner in Mt. Eden. She had called on the Prison Department in Wellington to get a permit for this man to publish stories. She had judged him a pleasant, intelligent fellow who had got into scrapes because he enjoyed outwitting the police. He did not want the proceeds of his crimes, but the intriguing and plotting. Miss Baughan had persuaded him to turn his talent to writing detective stories. . . and armed with the authority from Wellington, she was going to Mt. Eden to take charge of his authorship.<sup>63</sup>

Details of some of her many acts of service to causes and to individuals are obtainable in Burns' notes, in letters written to me from her younger contemporaries (currently in my possession), and in the texts of several interviews (included in the appendix). It should be added that although Baughan was of much assistance to others, she was not nearly so good at accepting help for herself. In fact she was so fiercely independent that neighbours and friends wanting to lend assistance to her in her extreme old

age needed to be diplomatic. Many anecdotes exist concerning various attempts, usually aborted, to be helpful.<sup>64</sup>

Baughan continued to perform acts of social service, health permitting, to the end. Her last act of service to the Howard League occurred when she was 84, when she went in person to the local court to give moral support to a woman being tried for shoplifting. The right of prisoners to legal aid was one of the many areas of change she fought for in penal reform.

Two central ideas guided her life: change and oneness. "New times, new solutions", (see appendix, p. 257), was a characteristic expression. Baughan was a changer. She attempted to apply change first to a new-look New Zealand poetic and later to change in New Zealand social services. Her concept of oneness, born of her transcendental experiences, gave her a close empathy with the broad mass of humanity, social outcasts included. It propelled her in the direction of social reform. It accounts, too, for her gravitation towards Vedantic thought. She found in Vedanta, "a totality of perception that some dogmas have ignored" ("Notes", p. 26). In the chapter to follow I will consider the literary provenance of these underpinning ideas.

\* \* \* \* \*

I have prefaced the introduction with a biographical account, not only because little of Baughan's background is currently available, but also because in her significant New Zealand poems the biographical undercurrent has considerable literary import, for there it may be seen as part of her identification with the New World ethos. In her colonial allegories Baughan fuses apparently self-referring allusions with an allegory of change and renewal in the colony, much as Walt Whitman does with his experiencing

persona in the broad vista of American development in "Song of Myself": "I am become any truth of humanity here,/And see myself in prison shaped like another man,/And feel the dull intermitted [sic] pain". Apparent biographical allusions in Baughan's major poems will be read not naively as references in the poems to things beyond the text, but as part of her identification with the New World ethos. I will return to this matter presently.



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## Notes.

<sup>1</sup>Berta Burns describes her as "about five feet, two inches in height, with keen brown eyes, a very straight back and a resolute and searching presence" ("Vedanta in Early New Zealand: a tribute to Blanche Edith Baughan", *Vedanta for East and West* (BAU BUR, 10/4/71, 150, 94 8, WTU.), p. 5. Berta Burns supplies some useful biographical details in "Memories of B.E. Baughan Recollected by Berta S. Burns" dated 1969, typescript, 26 p. (MS Papers 198, WTU.). Burns' typescript biographical notes will henceforth be referred to as "Notes". The photograph is reproduced from the booklet *The Summit Road: Its Scenery Botany Geology*, by B. E. Baughan, L. Cockayne, and R. Speight (Christchurch: Smith and Anthony, 1914), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>One of Baughan's early memories is of being tied to a chair by a detested Scottish governess till she learned to sew. She never did! Berta Burns mentions the Scottish governess in a document concerning matters relating to Baughan (TL 2/9/1 6.4.84). Mrs M. A. Skey mentions both a Scottish and a German governess (see "Interview with Mrs M. A. Skey", appendix, p. 261).

<sup>3</sup>John Baughan's death certificate was received from C. Alliance Centre, Secker Street, Waterloo, London, SE1 8UF, with explanatory note dated 29/1/986 (currently in my possession).

<sup>4</sup>The Putney address is given in the 1871 Census records, the Brighton ones were supplied by the archivist, Royal Holloway College, University of London.

<sup>5</sup>The quotation below is from a single leaf of typescript described as "some particulars relating to Miss Baughan - as told to Peter Alcock by Mrs Berta S. Burns at 5 Elizabeth street, Pukerua Bay [Wellington], 9 December, 1968" (TL 2/9/1 6.4.84).

Miss Baughan was not free to come to New Zealand until she was thirty years of age. This is because of her being occupied with the care of her mother through the seven preceding years until the latter's death, which released Miss Baughan . . . her [Baughan's] maternal grandfather, because of an act of insane homicide, had been confined to Broadmoor. This homicidal insanity appeared to be, in the knowledge of those days, a hereditary taint. Miss Baughan's mother became also mentally affected, necessitating the care above-mentioned, and homicidally assaulted her husband, John Baughan. It was through fear of transmitting this hereditary taint to her own offspring that Miss Baughan felt unable to marry.

<sup>6</sup> According to Berta Burns, "there were only fifteen of these scholarships granted, and Blanche came 11th against the whole of England" (quoted from a single typed sheet headed "Blanche Edith Baughan: Biographical Notes", dated Oct. 1958, MS Papers 198, WTU.).

Although Royal Holloway College did not become an accredited College in the University of London till 1900, Baughan, like most of the students there, read for a University of London degree. These had been opened to women in 1878.

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<sup>7</sup>David Wisely, son of Berta Burns' first marriage, first told me this story in a telephone conversation, 12/1/1985. The quotation is from his letter to me, 15/12/1985, from 1429 N. Havenhurst, # 29, Los Angeles, C.A. 90046, U.S.A. Berta Burns' one time daughter-in-law, Gae Neil, mentioned in the letter, was also aware of this incident.

<sup>8</sup>Betty Waller mentions the Swiss finishing school. She was one of several who showed me her little bear figurines, gifts from Baughan, allegedly souvenirs of this incident (see appendix, interview with Mrs Gwen Goodwin, p. 253, and interview with Mrs Betty Waller, p. 259).

<sup>9</sup>Details supplied by Elizabeth Bennet, archivist, Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, University of London, in a letter to me, 6/12/1986 (currently in my possession).

<sup>10</sup>Baughan mentions this in an article in the *Ladies' Mirror*, "Miss B. E. Baughan: Poetess, Writer and Social Worker" (the volume is not available, so precise date *et cetera* is not known), 1924, p. 16. The cutting was supplied by Betty Waller.

<sup>11</sup>Letter to me from Elizabeth Bennet, archivist, 8/9/1986 (currently in my possession).

<sup>12</sup>"New Zealand Champion of Penal Reform", *The New Zealand Woman's Weekly*, November 1935, p. 17.

<sup>13</sup>See "Interview with Betty Waller", appendix, p. 257. The phrase originates, apparently, from the elderly matron who was a supervisor in the slum resettlement project mentioned. In *Two New Zealand Roses* Baughan puts these very words into the mouth of "Matron Greene" who "said that to me all those many years ago, when I was just starting work in the slums" (p. 280). Baughan adds "and she gave me, I remember, those little wild daffodils from a box she'd just had, fresh from the country, they did help, too!" In the last year of her life, when aged eighty-eight, Baughan recalls, in a letter, the spiritually rejuvenating effect of daffodils amid the horrors of the London slums: "The poem you quote, 'Flower in the crannied wall' is by Tennyson", she writes, " & isn't it true! Years ago, in the slums of London, I was set free from a dreadful suspicion that the world was really the work of the Devil, by the sight of daffodils sold in the streets " (Letter to Morva Efford, Akaroa, 4/11/1958). An early poem, "Spring in London", *Verses*, pp. 36-37, records this incident.

<sup>14</sup>It seems that Baughan was able to get some relief from her duties from time to time. For instance, she is reported to have spent some time on holiday in the Lake District, where apparently, she met the elderly John Ruskin. Apparently too, she was involved in protest marches and demonstrations on behalf of the Suffragettes (see interview with Mrs Waller, appendix, p. 256).

<sup>15</sup>Baughan clarifies the issue in a 1924 *Ladies' Mirror* article:

In 1900 I came to New Zealand, and not long afterwards went for a trip round the islands, also to South Africa, and as far north as the Zambesi Falls. Later, the Yosemite Valley and California called to me and I spent a wonderful time there. Since then I have been to India, and twice back to England (op. cit., p. 16).

<sup>16</sup>In *Two New Zealand Roses*, (Chapter 13, pp. 216-29) she recounts such an affair, closely following the details given in Burns' "Notes", p. 2. For instance, the nominally fictional "Jeffrey", the Canadian engineer in the novel manuscript, has the same name, nationality and occupation as his real-life counterpart. The ship-board setting, too, is retained in the manuscript.

<sup>17</sup>From Drag, Advata Ashrama, Mayavati. There is an unexplained contradiction here. According to Burns' notes, Baughan travelled to California about this time to the Vedanta centres ("Notes", p. 6.), but the address given is Himalayan on this half-page fragment, dated Dec. 1913, commenting on her meeting with a Vedantist Swami, and on her having told him about her mother and Jeffrey. It seems likely that the apparent address is simply a note to herself of this Himalayan centre, for in 1916 she received a letter from Swami Pragnananda at this Himalayan address, in which it is obvious that she has not yet visited the centre. He writes: "Yours was not an unknown name to me, as I heard about you from our manager, and I am thankful to our friend Miss Macleod for bringing us together through correspondence" (B. E. Baughan MS Papers 198, WTU).

<sup>18</sup>This comment is printed on the frontispiece of *Reuben* Westminster: Constable, 1903.

<sup>19</sup>(21/2/1910). Baughan compares the English and New Zealand spring and rural scene in *Two New Zealand Roses*:

... I shouldn't think you could beat an English countryside in Spring, not anywhere in the world. But its all so much tamer, and littler, and the air's so much thicker ... Its like a film taken off one's eyes to see a New Zealand landscape after England - it really makes me laugh to see that toy of a cow on yonder hillside, tail and legs all so distinct and so tiny! In England, the whole of her would look a blur (p. 285).

<sup>20</sup>"For a time Blanche taught the classics to some of the nobility and later did extensive social service in the East End, London" (my emphasis, Burns' "Notes", p. 2), but Baughan herself reverses this order, the social work preceding the tutoring job, in her article in The 1924 *Ladies' Mirror*, mentioned above: "After that" [graduating], she said, "I did some settlement work in Shoreditch slums under a charity organization. Then I taught Greek to Adeline, Duchess of Bedford".

<sup>21</sup>Letter to me from the Duke of Bedford, 8 Quai d'Orleans, 75004 Paris, 12/7/1986 (Currently in my possession).

<sup>22</sup>"She had little interest in the pampered of this world" writes Aylmer Newton, a personal friend of B.E. Baughan in her Akaroa days. The quotation is from recollections of B. E. Baughan received from Aylmer Newton, 9B Neville Street, Christchurch, 6/1/1986 (currently in my possession).

<sup>23</sup>It seems that Baughan's faith in the feminist cause resulted in part from memories of some particularly effective women teachers from her student days. F. A. de la Mare, a close colleague in her Howard League activities, writes, "She came to New Zealand ... when the impress of the great women and the great books of her schools were upon her".

("The Prisoners' Friend" *The New Zealand Listener*, 12/9/1958, p. 5).

<sup>24</sup>This incident is recorded in *The Spectator*, 29/5/1897, p. 755 :

The proposal to confer the Cambridge degrees upon women was rejected in the Senate House at Cambridge yesterday week by nearly three to one ... The boys did their utmost to ridicule the defeated party, exhibiting the effigy of a suppositious lady with cap and gown, yellow pigtail and knickerbockers; and squibs and crackers, and bags of flour and

rotten eggs were thrown . . . to us this explosion of violent and unnecessary prejudice seems a mere burst of irrationality. In London University not only do the women get the same degree as the men, but are admitted to Convocation, where some few of the best speeches have been delivered by women.

<sup>25</sup>Letter to Miss Higgins, Chorlton, Banks Peninsula, 21/2/1910 (MS Papers 717 Baughan Collection, Folder 1, WTU.).

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Apparently Baughan's first instruction as a housekeeper was to boil eggs for tea, however "she didn't know whether to use hot or cold water, "but resourceful she ever was, and she used lukewarm water to be safe!" ("Notes", p. 3). Berta Burns describes Baughan's attempts at sewing as "utterly hopeless - she had no aptitude whatever and some of her 'cobblings' with her clothes were a disaster" ("Notes", p. 18).

<sup>28</sup>"The Prisoners' Friend", op. cit.

<sup>29</sup> Baughan discusses the youth in a letter to Johannes Andersen. She explains:

Shingle-Short knew about ratchets etc. [mentioned in the poem] because his father was a watch-maker & he himself could do anything with a clock. He was a remarkable lad - half a genius, quite . . . He seemed to me to be one of the most pathetic things my life has ever encountered - so little had spoiled somehow, so much. The spiritual world was very close to him, & in some respects he even palpably considered himself a special favourite of Providence! this was very much so in the case of his creative faculty! which was very strong in inception, & always migratory in execution. Thus he had many mechanical ideas - among them a very ingenious one of a plough share, & another of 'flying darts'. On the other hand the multiplication table passage [in "Shingle-Short"] is from life. He could scarcely read, I tried to teach him & we arrived at the word 'horse!' 'What's the E for? H-o-r-s would do' said he, puzzled - then, brightening up - 'I suppose the e is for its tail!' Abstract mathematics were beyond him, abstract emotion, even thought was not, & for the concrete, he had at once the widest and most limited appreciation. He really did (so he told me) make the boat [as in "Shingle-Short"] when he was a boy, and sailed it in Napier Harbour.

(9/8/1908. MS 7 J. C. Andersen papers, Auckland Institute and Museum Library).

This is one of eight letters from Baughan to Andersen held at the Institute and Museum Library. The letters range from 6 May 1908 to August 18, 1920. The letters are in two forms:

(1) The originals are in a box labeled: JOHANNES C. ANDERSEN Letters to him ca. 1905-46 Originals. The materials in the box are in envelopes. The Baughan letters are in 'Envelope 1 A-B'.

(2) The letters also exist in typescript in a bound volume labeled ' Letters to Johannes Carl Andersen/ca. 1905-46/ Typed by Mr G. Williams from/ originals in the Auckland Museum Library/1961.' [Letters in volume arranged alphabetically by writer].

<sup>30</sup>Whitcombe and Tombs (Christchurch (New Zealand); Melbourne and London), 1912.

<sup>31</sup>The photograph of Hunter's cottage is copied from the one supplied by Burns to the Turnbull Library (Baughan Papers, 198).

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<sup>32</sup>Appendix, p. 255. Mrs Goodwin is the "Gwen" mentioned in some of Baughan's letters, for instance to J.C. Andersen from Clifton, 30/12/1917 and to Ursula Bethell, Akaroa, 9/3/1937 (University of Canterbury archives).

<sup>33</sup>Letter to me from Scott Craw, Chorlton, Eastern Bay R.D. Duvauchelle, 21/10/1985 (currently in my possession).

<sup>34</sup>Mrs Hazel Waghorn (at age 94) of Chorlton, still had clear memories of winning two of Baughan's essay competitions: one for "Trafalgar Day" and one for "The Long Lookout" (Comments by Hazel Waghorn, of Chorlton, 28 Oct, 1985). Baughan fostered talent wherever she perceived it. A younger contemporary, Alymer Newton of Christchurch, writes that Baughan recognized her sister's academic potential and her interest in music and "provided considerable financial support in having [her] sent to boarding school when farm incomes were depressed and such a step impossible at the time."

("Notes concerning B.E.Baughan", received 16/1/1986, currently in my possession).

<sup>35</sup> Letter from Scott Craw, 21/10/1985.

<sup>36</sup>Apparently, it was Baughan's first published New Zealand poem, written on Trafalgar Day, 1905 and printed in the *Lyttelton Times*, that introduced her to the paper's literary editor. "The Prisoner's Friend", *The New Zealand Listener*, 12/6/1958, p. 5.

<sup>37</sup>The London office of Whitcombe and Tombs had been impressed by Baughan's (anonymous) essay in the *Spectator*, "Finest Walk in the World" [sic.], and had suggested to their Christchurch branch that it would make a good booklet. The publisher's note, prefacing the first edition [1908], reads:

The "Finest Walk in the world" appeared as an unsigned article in the London "Spectator." The present publishers were so struck with the beauty of thought exhibited in depicting one of nature's grandest panoramas, that they at once communicated with the "Spectator" for permission to republish. Just before a reply was received, the author was discovered in Christchurch . . . .

<sup>38</sup>"Johannes C. Andersen and Catherine Andersen: a biographical sketch by P. J. Gibbons" (Hamilton: Rimu Publishing Company, 1985. ), p. 4.

<sup>39</sup>Akaroa, 6/3/1936 (J.C. Andersen MS Papers 148: 37 WTu.).

<sup>40</sup>London: C.W. Daniel Co Ltd., 1935, pp.104-5.

<sup>41</sup>The philosophical and biographical import of these lines will be discussed in Chapter Four.

<sup>42</sup>B.E. Baughan, in *Brotherhood* magazine (quoted in Dr. Peter Simpson's notes, in my possession). Precise details of source not available.

<sup>43</sup>"It was a Mrs Bristow, wife of the editor of the Christchurch *Press*, who first interested Baughan in Vedanta", writes Berta Burns in "Vedanta in Early New Zealand", *Vedanta for East and West*, 1971, no. 120, p. 4. A footnote on p. 5 of the issue tells us that a 1916 issue of the *Voice*

of *Freedom*, published by the San Francisco Centre, refers to Vedanta study classes formed at Christchurch by Miss Baughan.

<sup>44</sup>In a half-page fragment dated Dec. 1913, Baughan records her meeting with Swami Prajnananda:

Green leaves everywhere, like apple-blossom, & little lupins & poppies Spring/ & a spring in my soul a new Birthday - no wonder I looked young I felt radiant - After long wandering on the mountain have I indeed found the trail, & a guide (B. E. Baughan MS. Papers 198, WTU.).

<sup>45</sup> Akaroa, 20/3/1937 (B.E. Baughan MS Papers, WTU.).

<sup>46</sup>Letter to W. F. Alexander, 8/2/1913 (W.F. Alexander MS Papers, 423, WTU.).

<sup>47</sup>*New Zealand Woman's Weekly*, 12/6/1958, p. 5.

<sup>48</sup>Letter to Alexander, 20/3/1937 (B. E. Baughan Papers, WTU.).

<sup>49</sup>The photograph, by J. J. Kinsey, is reproduced from *Glimpses of New Zealand Scenery*, p. 77. It is described by Berta Burns in "Vedanta in Early New Zealand: A Tribute to Blanche Edith Baughan", *Vedanta for East and West*, op. cit, p. 3.

<sup>50</sup>It is not generally known that Baughan made a significant collection of hitherto unrecorded plants from the Westland slopes of Copeland Pass and in the Copeland Valley. The collection is itemized in *Transactions of The New Zealand Institute* 45: 251-263, 1913, in Cockayne's series "Some hitherto-unrecorded plant-habitats (V111)" Through Baughan, Laing became active in the Howard League. He was one of the small group at the inaugural meeting held in 1924, at 24 Cathedral Square, Christchurch ("Notes", p. 8.).

<sup>51</sup>It is interesting to compare the style of a passage of Ruskin's descriptive writing from *The Stones of Venice* published in the same edition of the *Spectator* that published Baughan's essay on New Zealand alpine Scenery, "Snow Kings of the Southern Alps". The stylistic derivation is obvious. Ruskin writes:

Green field and glowing rock, and glancing streamlet, all slope together in the sunshine towards the brows of the ravines, where the pines take up their own dominion of saddened shade; and with everlasting roar in the twilight the stronger currents thunder down, pale from the glaciers, filling all their chasm with enchanted cold, beating themselves to pieces against the great rocks that they have themselves cast down, and forcing fierce way beneath their ghastly poise.

In "Snow Kings of the Southern Alps" (p. 85), Baughan writes:

... terrible at once and glorious the downsweep of the glaciers below all three, rushing down to join the Tasman" "Motionless torrents, silent cataracts," whose frozen fantasies of glittering blue-and-white completely fill the eye as we look straight into them from the hut. Beyond them to the right still the white arc sweeps on, of inexhaustible peaks and precipices bulwarked here and there with black; until another great monarch, Elie de Beaumont, steps forth to sentinel the valley head; and, by the soft white lap of the Lendenfel Pass, where the little mists love to curl, and the broad, benevolent curves of the Hochstetter Shoulder and Hochstetter Dome - from whose summit one can look down upon the western sea, only a few miles off - all is rounded with smooth purity.

Sonorous, exalted, subjective, emotive - the adjectives apply to both passages. One could compare as well their typical use of personification: Ruskin's "brows" of the ravines, with her Hochstetter "Shoulder", or the pathetic fallacy in Ruskin's "saddened shade", with her "benevolent curves". Both, typically, make use occasionally of alliteration: Ruskin's "forcing fierce", her "frozen fantasies". The pitfalls of the style may be seen in Baughan's sentimental "where the little mists love to curl". But the master himself supplies a good many examples of such whimsical fancy - for example, "enchanted cold" above.

<sup>52</sup>Baughan's interest in colloquial speech and lively idiom is furthered in her sketches "Grandmother Speaks", "*Cafe au Lait*", and "Red Yellow and Ripe". Her experiment with a "naive narrator", begun with "Shingle-Short", is repeated in "Red and Yellow and Ripe" in which two old colonial women unwittingly expose their prejudices. Her divergence from the stock heroine of Victorian Romance, seen in her creation of non-conformist Janet (of "The Paddock"), is widened in her conception of the outrageous old crone, Pipi, of "Pipi on the Prowl".

<sup>53</sup>See interview with Mrs Skey, p. 261.

<sup>54</sup>See interview with Mrs Goodwin, p. 255. See also Baughan's notes and comments in German on Nietzsche, and others (B. E. Baughan MS Papers 198, WTu.).

<sup>55</sup>Ibid. Baughan mentions her nursing of influenza victims in a letter to J. C. (Hans) Andersen, Clifton, 30/12/1917 (J. C. Andersen Papers, MS 7, Auckland Institute and Museum library).

<sup>56</sup> The episode is somewhat mysterious in that I can find no reference to it, other than in a letter (to me) from Mrs Betty Phillips, Akaroa, 14/4/86:

The day [Baughan] died she talked for a long time & told me all about herself from girlhood & about the days when she went into prisons . . . I was so pleased it was like reading a book - but the only thing that sticks clearly in my mind was that as a young woman in N.Z. . . . she contracted t. b. & was given only a few months to live but her very good friend Bertha [sic.] . . . wouldn't accept the doctor's verdict so she got hold of everything she could about T.B. then she went to a farm & got permission to take B.B. there the [sic.] she put up a tent fly between two trees & moved B.B. & herself in & she nursed her until she cured the disease & she told me that was why she left everything to her when she died. . . .

(Baughan did in fact leave her cottage to her close friend Berta Burns). Several incidents in *Two New Zealand Roses* suggest a disguised reference to the episode above:

(1) Rosamond, by now in her late middle age, arrives back home exhausted by a strenuous period spent nursing in the district [Baughan did such work, especially, as we noted above, during the influenza epidemic of 1918] - it transpires that Rosamond is fatally ill (p. 347) and the doctor gives her very little time to live. Her close and rather younger friend Roz nurses her back to health.

(2) In her "Notes", Burns describes the aging Baughan sitting by the fireside in an Indian dressing - gown (p. 18). In *Two New Zealand Roses* (p. 342), the aging and ill Rosamond sits by the fire in her brightly embroidered "coat of many colours" as she is fussed over by her solicitous friend. [Mrs Phillips admits to being unsure of Baughan's age at this time - she had the impression that Baughan would have been a young woman]. In fact, Baughan would have had to have been middle-aged at least, since she was 49 when Berta Burns, then a young woman, first

met her (Burns' "Notes", p. 7). Their relationship was a close one. Burns writes: "... for forty years ... we shared much and enjoyed a deep respect and love for each other".

<sup>57</sup>Letter to Andersen, WTU., op. cit. She used the "beauty from ashes" symbolism in many contexts. A characteristic comment concerns the manuscript of *Two New Zealand Roses* ("Rosy") which in 1946 she gave to Berta Burns. In reference this she writes, "Remember "Rosy" is yours, won't you? I should doubt if any publisher would take her (no money in her) but one never knows, & I don't really care; only don't let her worry you, & remember that ashes are very good for the garden!"

(Letter to Berta Burns, 12/10/1956, Baughan Papers, WTU.).

<sup>58</sup>Letter to Andersen, 6/3/1936 (MS Papers 148: 37, WTU.).

<sup>59</sup>The *Ladies' Mirror*, op. cit., p.16.

<sup>60</sup>Letter, 6/3/1936, op. cit.

<sup>61</sup>(Unicorn Press, 1936). She used a nom-de-plume T.I.S. (Greek for 'anybody'), to avoid the strong prejudice which her "ceaseless vigorous campaigning" attached to her own signature (Berta S. Burns, "A Tribute to Blanche Edith Baughan", *Vedanta for East and West*, op cit., p. 6.

<sup>62</sup>Her main objectives were; the proper training of prison officials; classification of prisoners; and the extensive use of probation.

The Alexander Turnbull library carries considerably more information on Baughan's social work activities than on her literary ones: MS Papers 144: files of correspondence in connection with the Howard League. See also, The Lincoln Efford Papers 442:2 containing files of correspondence with Lincoln Efford relating to Howard League activities.

<sup>63</sup>"B. E. Baughan: Some Memories", *Landfall*, XII, No. 4, December 1958, p. 334.

<sup>64</sup>Berta Burns, for instance, writes that Baughan became somewhat absent-minded, and frequently mislaid objects: "It was her custom to draw a weekly cheque for her needs on the local Bank of N.Z. & receive the cash itself. But she had been misplacing things ... I thought I'd quietly observe where she put the money this week & waited at the door till I saw exactly where she placed it. I'm sure she didn't see my glance - but felt it. Having put the money in her purse, she marched straight up to me & with the greatest vehemence said 'I object to being supervised!'"

(Anecdotes by B.E.Burns, B.E. Baughan, MS Papers 198, WTU.).



## CHAPTER TWO: GENERAL INTRODUCTION.

- (i) Baughan's Early Volumes (p. 32).
- (ii) Baughan and her New Zealand Literary Contemporaries (p. 35).
- (iii) Baughan's Australian Literary Contemporaries (p. 46).
- (iv) The New England Influence (pp. 50-68):
  - (a) Making Connections; (b) Major Ideas of the Time;
  - (c) Baughan's Empathy with Carlyle and Emerson;
  - (d) Whitman in the Antipodes; (e) Literary Spinoffs: "New Worldism", Baughan's Stepping-Stone to "Modernism".
- Endnotes (p. 69).

### (i) Baughan's Early Volumes.

In the decade before her arrival in New Zealand, Baughan, through her involvement with the Suffragette movement and social work, was already fired with the urge to make changes. It was some years later before this reforming drive made itself felt in her poetry. Indeed her first volume of poems offers no surprises - at least as far as style is concerned. Baughan gives us precisely what we would expect of a late Victorian tyro. Her starting-point is nineteenth century English poetry, with some allusion to classical thought. *Verses*, we have noted, was well received in Britain when it appeared in 1898.<sup>1</sup> It is not surprising that in this first volume there should be echoes of major English poets and examples of experiment with a variety of (given) verse forms. Her work ranges from (in poems such as "Barbara" and "Home") simple, spare lyrics recalling perhaps Christina Rossetti or Thomas Hood, to a more elaborate style in the blank verse stanzas of "Leon" which reflect in mood, Latinate syntax and archaic vocabulary, Tennyson's Arthurian sagas. Some verses suggest the influence of Swinburne in their over-lushness and

occasional alliterating lines. Baughan's "Briar Rose" is a well-executed exercise in Pre-Raphaelite mood and mode. Her empathy with a Wordsworthian concept of God-in-nature and of Nature-as-teacher is evident in such poems as "Five Prayers", "Saint Margaret", and "Cottage Days".

Several of these early poems, however, anticipate the transcendentalism that colours her more significant New Zealand work. These are worth noting, for I will suggest that it is mainly the ideas derived from this source that generate the "modern" elements in her work. In "Comfort" (p. 100), for instance, she implies a cheerful acceptance of personal annihilation in the faith that the all-containing One is eternal. The poem virtually paraphrases Emerson's comment in "The Oversoul: "The landscape, the figures, Boston, London, are facts as fugitive as any institution past, or any whiff of mist or smoke, and so is society, and so is the world. The soul looketh steadily forwards, creating a world before her, leaving worlds behind her" (*Essays*, p. 162). In "Death in Life", Baughan conveys a transcendentalist dissolution of the ego, and the total merging with creation at large:

Gone is the misty question "What am I?"  
 No part of me but in the sunlight shares  
 I am become a morsel of blue sky,  
 A breath among the slowly-sauntering airs.

(p. 18)

Emerson had expressed a similar dissolving of identity when contemplating nature: " . . . all mean egotism vanishes. I am become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part and parcel of God".<sup>2</sup> Whitman conveyed a similar impression: "There was a child went forth every day,/And the first object he looked upon and received with wonder . . . that object he became . . .

The early lilacs became part of this child, And grass, and white and red morningglories [sic.] . . ." (*Leaves of Grass , Poetry and Prose*, p. 138).

Three further poems in *Verses*, "The Summons" (p. 19), "Forgiven" (p. 25), and "Saint Margaret" (pp. 26-33), seem to confirm Baughan's description of her early feeling for Nature: "I suppose I was a 'Nature-mystic' without knowing it".<sup>3</sup> The visionary implications of these poems suggest that even before her arrival in New Zealand, she had gravitated to a position from which some of the ideas emanating from the American Transcendentalists would seem irresistibly attractive. However, the greater number of poems included here may be considered as merely competent imitations of given English literary models. They serve as a measure of the degree of change achieved by Baughan in her significant *Shingle-Short* poems.

Although not published till 1903, her second volume, *Reuben and other poems*, is made up mainly of work written in England - and it shows. The very long title poem (pp. 9-45), for instance, is a successful exercise in Wordsworthian blank verse. "Phocas" (pp.48-55), recalls rhythms of Tennyson's "The Lady of Shallot". "Outside o' the Mail into Mennen" (pp. 78-84), is a typical West Country ballad. However, we find in some of the shorter poems significant pointers to changes to come. She hints at her coming interest in perspective and perception in "The Ship and the Sea" (pp. 75-7), for instance, in the line "[the ship] no longer sees itself in human eyes". An acquaintance with Whitman is suggested in the strident tone, coarse imagery, and unkempt visual appearance of "Brighton Front" (pp. 56-9). Two "bush ballad"-type poems, "Young Hotspur" and "The Old Place", included near the end of the volume announce her arrival in the antipodes, and her attempt to reproduce the unpretentious Australasian product. Baughan

underlines her antipodean consciousness by writing "New Zealand" beneath their titles.

However, it is not till her third, and most important volume, *Shingle-Short*, that there appears to be any palpable correlation between ideas derived from the American Transcendentalists and innovations in her poetic text. The first *overt* transcendentalist influence in Baughan's New Zealand poems occurs in her long ballad, "The Conquering Coward" in *Shingle-Short*. It was based on a 1903 magazine article, and centres on a quatrain from Emerson's poem, "The Voluntaries" - which she quotes in a footnote (p. 112).

The influence of the American Transcendentalists on her work will be investigated presently. First I will consider the Antipodean influence. I will background the literary scene that Baughan encountered in New Zealand in the early years of the century. Significant aspects of her poetry will be compared or contrasted with that of her contemporaries and those who preceded her, and the reaction of her contemporary critics will be noted. I will then consider, briefly, the parallel literary scene in Australia, and her association with it.

## (ii) Baughan and her New Zealand Literary Contemporaries.

Berta Burns tells us that Baughan arrived in New Zealand "filled with a sense of high adventure and freedom".<sup>4</sup> As we shall see presently, her first impressions of the country were of its rawness, its newness, and the embryonic state of its development. Baughan had a strong sense of beginnings: "It's good to be in at the sowin' o' seed that's bound to grow, be it cabbage, or a country ". These words she puts into the mouth of her colonial "Grandmother",<sup>5</sup> but one suspects they express her own feelings as a new

immigrant. Baughan looked to the new colonial literatures of New Zealand and Australia for "a new way of saying". However, she was not to find a suitable ready-made model in her chosen colony. She found instead, inspiration in the very intractability of the land itself.

Baughan had missed the first wave of literary nationalism culminating in the 1890s with the formation of the various branches of The New Zealand Natives Association, formed with the object of creating "a feeling of patriotism and nationality", and had avoided the disappointment of many of her colonial contemporaries of seeing their hopes for a national literary magazine fade with the failing of the Association's periodical, *Zealandia* <sup>6</sup> at the end of its first year of publication. She was, however, in time to experience a new wave of national and literary optimism generated by the newly-formed New Zealand Literary and Historic Association. Some months before her arrival, attempts had been made by two new publications (*Atea* and *Critic*) <sup>7</sup> to succeed where *Zealandia* had failed, and for the next ten years, about a dozen magazines contribute to the decade's dismal history of hopeful beginnings and regretful closings of its literary periodicals.

The *New Zealand Illustrated Magazine* aimed to produce literary works with "a distinctive New Zealand colouring", and that, with minor variations, was the intention of its successors. However, it is obvious from their (poetic) contents that in general a "New Zealand colouring" simply meant the addition of tui, kowhai, or other clichéd local referents to what was essentially English Romantic or Edwardian poetry.

The small band of die-hard enthusiasts for a "national literature" was supported by a number of editors of literary pages in then major newspapers. The *Lyttelton Times* literary editor, S. Saunders, looked for an indigenous

quality in local products for review. When A. A. Grace's *Tales of a Dying Race* appeared in 1902 the reviewer praised it as "the first successful endeavour to catch something of the Maori spirit and cage it in fiction form".<sup>8</sup> He admired Satchell's *Land of the Lost* for similar reasons.<sup>9</sup> Of "G. B. Lancaster's" latest book, *Tracks We Tread*, he wrote, "She is producing genuine native literature".<sup>10</sup> S. Saunders is significant in Baughan's evolution as a nation-conscious New Zealand writer. It was through him that she was put in touch with Jessie Mackay, J. C. Andersen, and other writers, contacts which, she said, "began my writing career in New Zealand".<sup>11</sup>

Baughan's consistent use of the possessive "our" in respect to matters concerning this country underlines her early, strong identification with the colonial psyche. She wrote, "I find myself now that English people are less formal to those who come from the colonies - they make allowances for us ! ! perhaps - or perhaps our sense of freedom reacts on them. Pray observe I say 'our' . . . ".<sup>12</sup> Her national and local consciousness is evident in her review of a New Zealand novel for the *Lyttelton Times*. Baughan registered disappointment at its lack of local flavour and its characters' lack of conviction as colonials in a colonial setting: "Mr Buchanan himself may be claimed as colonial, but assuredly neither the problem nor the personages of his novel belong to *our* everyday life" (my emphasis).<sup>13</sup> However, although Baughan tactfully refers to her colleagues' New Zealand-written poems as "the national literature" (for instance in a letter to J. C. Andersen, 9/8/1908 [see below]), the consistent message to be found in her allegories is that major changes will need to be made before a *genuine* indigenous poetic can emerge.

Talbot-Tubbs, editor of the *New Zealand Illustrated Magazine*, admitted in his first editorial (p. 1) that "it is already possible to speak of an Australian School of poetry and painting", though not yet of one in New Zealand. The

*New Zealand Illustrated Magazine*, like the *Critic*, was concerned to wean local contributors from dependence on Australian publishers. Baughan too, as we have seen, objected to the need to rely on Australian and English sources for publication. The Wellington *Dominion*'s literary editor exhibited his anti-*Bulletin* bias in his review of *Shingle-Short* wherein he made Baughan's originality the occasion for an unflattering comparison with "The *Bulletin* poets", who, he said, "are still overlaying the old insincere fancies with the sticky lacquer of flashy artifice".<sup>14</sup> Baughan joined the fray. She wrote to J. C. Andersen:

I loathe the *Bulletin*! Mr Whitcombe [of Whitcombe and Tombs] pleased me by calling it a low rag & thinking that he wouldn't send a copy of Shingle-Short for review... but he evidently weakened on that half-resolve. . . . I suppose I should be reasonably grateful to it - but as a matter of fact I am almost sorry that any words of mine should appear in it at all, even as quotations.<sup>15</sup>

Baughan's intense dislike of the *Bulletin* was possibly influenced by the fact that her friend Andersen had recently received a scathing review in its "Red Page".<sup>16</sup> However, the *Bulletin* paid its contributors, and that fact encouraged many New Zealand writers to seek publication there, for very few periodicals or papers in this country offered payment. I mentioned earlier that when sales for *Shingle-Short* appeared to be going well, Baughan took advantage of the situation to force a change. No doubt Baughan's involvement in protests on behalf of "the national literature" helped strengthen her identity with it - or, rather, with her notion of what it should be. Her friendship with Jessie Mackay, the spearhead of the national literary movement of the 1890s, and a regular contributor and critic for the *NZIM*, was formative in promoting the *idea* of a national literature, even though Mackay's own work gives no convincing sign of understanding what an indigenous poetic should be. Indeed, her comments in the Foreword to *New*

*Zealand Rhymes Old and New*,<sup>17</sup> which she edited, underscore the ambivalence of her concept of a "national" literature. Comparing New Zealand and Australian poetry, she wrote, "The former grafted itself on the good old Saxon stem; the latter 'just grewed' like Topsy". She added that she has largely excluded "topical verse" from the volume; instead, "prominence has been given to the early links binding New Zealand art and sentiment to those of the beloved Motherland; and the aim has been throughout to dwell on the quiet but everlasting verities on which English poetry anchors" (pp. 4-5). This determination to retain a consciousness of English literary parentage was made at about the same time that Baughan herself was just as consciously attempting to sever that link: "They are old: are they therefore so wise?" (*Maui's Fish*", *Shingle-Short*, p. 59).

Baughan's change of direction came very soon after the turn of the century. The most dramatic way to highlight her literary evolution is to return briefly to her 1903 volume, *Reuben*, and to contrast the opening verse of the title poem with some lines from one of the "New Zealand" ballads in the same book. "Reuben" opens with a fine flourish:

Behind a bleak unshelter'd promontory -  
 Seventy fathom of white chalk plunged down  
 Sheer to deep sea, and edge to open space:  
 Where, at her extreme bourne and outlook, Earth  
 Stands up, and with a bared and dauntless brow  
 Superbly fronts far ocean, shoreless air: -

(p. 9).

She aims here at a Miltonic grandeur "That with no middle flight intends to soar/Above th' Aonian mount". Sharply contrasted is the down-to-earth lack of pretension of "Young Hotspur" in which her young colonial farm-hand has volunteered for the Boer War for the most unromantic of reasons: "I



have scored my last tally, I've done my last dip,/And, thank God, there's no crutching aboard of a ship" (p. 85). The lines quoted give advance warning of the new mood of iconoclasm that is to characterize the major poems of *Shingle-Short*. They deflate the pompous flag-waving rhetoric of colonial contemporaries, displayed, for example, by William Satchell, in "Song of the Empire":

. . . soldiers, our soldiers -  
Saddling up in Africa,  
Everyone our own.  
For the cause before us,  
And the race that bore us,  
And the noblest empire  
that the world has known.<sup>18</sup>

Her second ballad, "The Old Place" signals the arrival of a new hard-hitting realism to counteract the prevailing "poetical" whimsy. One could contrast, for instance, Baughan's unsentimental vision of a flooded creek, in that poem, with the fanciful description of Bowen Falls in Milford Sound by her contemporary, Hubert Church. Baughan's old colonial scrub-farmer tells of,

The creek dried up by November, and in May a thundering  
roar  
That carries down toll o' your stock to salt 'em whole  
on the shore.<sup>19</sup>

Hubert Church unwittingly points up the malaise infecting indigenous poetry, in his windy apostrophe to Bowen Falls, "Falling for ever to white virginals/Of olden melody".<sup>20</sup> In fact most of Baughan's contemporary "poets" deserved Curnow's description that, "In these 'stone-deaf islands' they spoke like the deaf, out of pitch and out of touch with the common converse of the place".<sup>21</sup> D. M. Ross certainly did. He apostrophized his "Maoriland"

with typical bombast: "Child of Old Empire!/Best beloved alone!/The Wizard moon and all her starry fays/Have made their mirror in thy waterways".<sup>22</sup>

William Satchell may deserve some recognition as a novelist, but as a poet, he too, points up the fashion for melodious insincerity in such lines, for instance, as "The bell-birds in the magic woods,/O hearken to the witching strain . . . Oh hush! oh, hear! A goblin chime,/The dew-drop trembles on the branch . . .".<sup>23</sup>

The poet-novelist Arthur H. Adams, despite producing some poems of literary merit,<sup>24</sup> was capable also of presenting a New Zealand unrecognizable, surely, to its inhabitants. His paeon to "Maoriland" begins, "O, my land of the moa and Maori,/Garlanded grand with your forests of kauri".<sup>25</sup> Jessie Mackay's "Spring Fires" opens with an intimation of realism but it soon dissolves in fanciful nostalgia:

The scent of burning tussock on the Canterbury hills,  
The richness and the mystery that waken like a lyre  
With the dreariness of a dreaming that never yet fulfils!  
And we know it, and we know it, but we love the moon of fire!<sup>26</sup>

Baughan goes at least some way toward relating both language and image to her adopted land, as will be illustrated in the commentary on "Shingle-Short" in chapter four. Her attempt at antipodean idiom in that poem has a parallel of sorts in the ballads of David McKee Wright. Wright was producing a local equivalent of Banjo Paterson's Australian ballads. Wright's ballads are hardly "Poetry" of course, but their sense of location highlights the absence of this factor amongst his fellow rhymsters. A similar antipodean consciousness appears in some of the stories and ballads of "G. B. Lancaster" (Edith Lyttelton). Lancaster's bush ballad "What Used to Be" (1906), for instance, is not entirely "out of touch with the common converse of the place". And, like Baughan, she essays a realistic imagery:

Hill an' ridge an' barren river, all the station ridin',  
Mobs o' cattle, flanks a-quiver, in the ti-tree hidin';

Cloudin' dust, an red sun flarin', 'member  
 how we caught 'em,  
 Wheeled 'em (thousand eyes a-glarin');  
 'long the sidin' brought 'em!<sup>27</sup>

Lancaster, of course, is better known as a prose writer. Something approaching a local orientation can be seen in some of her novels as well. *The Tracks We Tread*, we noted, was praised for its local flavour.

Baughan's concept of herself as a "New Zealand" writer is an essential aspect of her "modernism". She was writing her *Shingle-Short* poems at a time when when the expected attitude of English-born colonials to their adopted land was reflected in such verses as Mary Colbourne-Veel's "Emigravit":

Homely flowers set  
 Where our homesteads rise  
 Make an England yet  
 Under sunny skies.<sup>28</sup>

Baughan wrote no such fond home thoughts from abroad. In *Reuben*, (pp. 56-7), she had bade an acidic farewell to her home town, Brighton, England in her poem "Brighton Front", which begins:

Spew'd forth in fell array  
 'Gainst yon accusing presence of pure Even'  
 Look where the town's thick volley of foul breath  
     Hits and besmirches Heaven,  
     And spurs the dying day  
         Unto its death.

However, there were small signs of a beginning of a turn in the tide of pro-British sentiment amongst a few of Baughan's New Zealand-born contemporaries. Dora Wilcox, who was for a time one of the "New Zealand

Circle" at the London Lyceum Club, was able to write of her London experience:

When I look out on London's teeming streets,  
On grim grey houses, and on leaden skies,  
My courage fails me, and my heart grows sick,  
And I remember that fair heritage  
Barter'd by me for what your London gives<sup>29</sup>

Arthur Adams, too, presented a positive view of the break with the Motherland, for instance in the final verse of "The Dwellings of Our Dead":

They came as lovers come, all else forsaking,  
The bonds of home and kindred proudly breaking;  
They lie in splendour lone -  
The nation of their making  
Their everlasting throne!

But none was as unabashedly pro-New Zealand as Baughan. Her difference from her fellow writers was noticed. With the publication of *Shingle-Short* she received considerable recognition both here and overseas as an originator. Many reviews pointed to the contrast between her work and that being produced by her contemporaries. The Wellington *Dominion's* reviewer in 1910 referred to her work as "a blaze of gold in a steady grey stream of native clay."<sup>30</sup> Soon after *Shingle-Short's* publication in 1908, the *Dominion* critic recognized her originality:

. . . a little rugged, but she has strength, emotion, and a depth and breadth of thought that is bracing and refreshing in a day when the Bulletin poets, with a few honourable exceptions, are still overlaying the old insincere fancies with the sticky lacquer of flashy artifice.<sup>31</sup>

And referring to her overseas reception he comments, "Our modified transports were outdone by the best British critics." The London *Daily Telegraph* found in *Shingle-Short* "The most notably individual expression of

poetry which we have had to welcome from New Zealand".<sup>32</sup> The *Sydney Bulletin* review concluded - after some reservations - that *Shingle-Short* had ensured Baughan "a final place in the select list of Australasian poets".<sup>33</sup> The *Lyttelton Times*, in 1908 our major morning paper (that is, it claimed to have the largest New Zealand circulation), was impressed with the indigenous quality of her work: ". . . the manner in which she has caught and fixed the local atmosphere is little short of wonderful. Her verses have a general virility that is most impressive".<sup>34</sup> Even the *Triad*'s critic, who had been annoyed by the *Dominion*'s review which had named Blanche Baughan, Jessie Mackay and Arnold Wall as the best Australasian poets, managed some moderate approval of Baughan, but less for the other two cited, in this level-headed summary of the *status quo*:

The *Dominion* (Wgt.), in an article that reeks of fulsome flattery of Miss Mackay's gentle muse, seriously asserts that the three finest poets of Australia are Miss Baughan, Miss Mackay, and Arnold Wall, - all, of course persons resident in New Zealand . . . the statement is clearly preposterous. Mr Wall writes very fine verses that sometimes rise to poetry; Miss Baughan writes some undeniably good poetry that lapses on occasion into rather bad verse; and Miss Mackay has given us, among a mass of stuff of no value whatever, a few good lyric pieces.<sup>35</sup>

Of course not everyone was favourably impressed. But in general, the faults complained of point up the widening sensibility-gap in the early years of the century between those still clinging to traditional poetic conventions (who disapproved of this iconoclast who had come among them) and those who aligned themselves with the New World ethos, and who therefore approved of the new and relevant in literature. The same critical dichotomy gives rise to dramatic contrasts in the reception of the work of her more conservative contemporary versifiers. Her friend J. C. Andersen's *Lamp of Psyche*, for instance, which was scorned by the *Sydney Bulletin*'s forward-looking "Red Page" reviewer was praised by Professor J. Macmillan Brown, who in 1908 still

approved of "the best in European literature" as a suitable guide for a would-be New Zealand writer:

On almost every page that I read, I recognized the fine music by nature wedded to beauty of emotion or thought that makes the work of a real poet. I could not fail to find echoes of the old familiar Home singers, for Mr Andersen is manifestly a keen student of all that is poetically best in European literature.<sup>36</sup>

Richard Pinfold of Timaru, well-known at the time as a commentator on literary matters, typifies the prevailing critical ethos still firmly oriented to the conventions of English literature. In a note to novelist/critic Pat Lawlor, he complains about Baughan's refusal to stick to the rules of poetic scansion and adds that "sometimes the lines seem more like a literal translation from a foreign language".<sup>37</sup> Such a reaction points up the newness of what Baughan was attempting. Pinfold continued his objections in his review of *Shingle-Short*: "Mr [sic.] Baughan evidently fears to become monotonous . . . . One can rarely with safety abandon oneself to the swing of his verse. One is tripped up continually by variation of metre".<sup>38</sup> A. G. Stephens of the Christchurch *Press* was not impressed with Baughan's attempts to introduce a vernacular free verse technique in some of the poems. He complains that "some of Miss Baughan's verse has already run half-way to prose . . . more than half-way in some passages of "Shingle-Short", which are neither fish nor flesh . . . however good".<sup>39</sup> Stephens, nevertheless, seems impressed with Baughan's new "Australasian Rank", since he admitted that her work is now "important to us."<sup>40</sup> His comment is a fair indication of the prestige of Australian literature already recognized - though often begrudgingly - by literary aspirants in New Zealand; and certainly the Australian literary scene contributed in some degree to the development in Baughan of a sense of national, or at least antipodean, identity.

### (iii) Baughan's Australian Literary Contemporaries.

Inevitably, the example from Australia of a vigorous literature near at hand bolstered aspirations to produce an indigenous version here. Baughan was well aware of the Australian literary scene, and even, in a small way, contributed to it. Possibly her first poem written here, "The Creek in the Paddock" (ca 1900?),<sup>41</sup> was sent to Australia for publication. It exists in manuscript form in a volume described in the Sydney Library's manuscript catalogue as : "*Bulletin* Manuscripts. Contributions by various authors 1880 (?) -1910 (?) (CY 1540) pp 114-117." The poem is at least of literary historic interest, for it shows, especially if the Alexander Turnbull Library's suggested date for the same volume - 1880 - 1900 is correct (c.f. the Mitchell's suggested 1880 - 1910), how quickly Baughan absorbed "local colour" in this turn-of-the-century attempt at Australasian verse. Even if the Turnbull's suggested time-frame is not correct, it is certain that Baughan was writing New Zealand-oriented ballads by 1902, for "Young Hotspur" and "The Old Place" were first published in the London *Spectator* in that year.<sup>42</sup> "The Creek in the Paddock" re-appears, with some changes, as "Song of the Creek" in "The Paddock", *Shingle-Short*, pp. 156-59. Another early poem to capitalize on the antipodean locale, "Morning", was sent to Australia for publication.<sup>43</sup> Baughan reconstituted parts of this short poem as background in the much longer "Shingle-Short". G. A. Stephens, who did much to foster Australian writing during his editorship of the *Bulletin* till his retirement in 1906, published some of her *Shingle-Short* poems in the periodical *Bookfellow* which he subsequently edited. The magazine *Australia* contains some of her work. Her long ballad "The Hill" appears in *The Golden Treasury of Australian Verse* (my emphasis).<sup>44</sup> The *Bulletin* review, we remember, accorded Baughan "a final place in the select list of *Australasian* poets" (my emphasis), and the

Christchurch *Press* editor, A. G. Stephens acknowledged her "Australasian" ranking.

The most prominent Australian poets in the first decade of the century were (in order of birth), Mary Gilmour, Bernard O'Dowd, Christopher Brennan, John Shaw Neilson, Hugh McCrae, "Furnley Maurice" (Frank Wilmot) and William Baylebridge. The nationalist-radical element in Baughan's poems (most notably in "Maui's Fish"), finds an empathetic echo in the work of three Australian contemporaries, Mary Gilmour, Bernard O'Dowd and Furnley Maurice. O'Dowd and Maurice, especially, were attempting to do in Australian verse what Baughan was attempting in New Zealand, and at about the same time - namely, to inject a sense of moral earnestness into the young nation. Baughan, however, had some reservations about O'Dowd's overt moralizing. Of his *Poetry Militant*, she writes, "I was grateful for the call to seriousness . . . although I feel uncertain as to how far poetry can be directly written with a moral purpose".<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, she shared his strong conviction of the need to refrain from subservience to the parent literature. O'Dowd writes: "I raise my protest and encourage my comrades to raise their protests, in word, but preferably in deed, against subservience to the past."<sup>46</sup> Baughan's flamboyant poetic style is completely at odds with O'Dowd's characteristically bald fourteeners, but many of their ideas spring from a common source. Some of O'Dowd's ideas are recycled from Whitman, and from Carlyle via Whitman, the two common ancestors (in a literary sense) that he shares with Baughan. Baughan was not alone, either, among her contemporaries in her interest in the German idealists. (I noted earlier, that in New Zealand her friend J. C. Andersen was involved in translating some of the German idealist poets). It was Whitman's essay on Carlyle that first inspired young Bernard O'Dowd, at 24, to write to his "Beloved Master":



. . . your essay on Carlyle has told me, once a wanderer in the desert scorched by a material sun, that there is a night too glowing with starlife (in a word it caused me to study Hegel).<sup>47</sup>

And some of his ideas, like Baughan's, suggest a similar line of derivation, that is, from Plato via the American Transcendentalists. We are reminded, for instance, of Plato's concept of the One/the Good, and Emerson's "the Oversoul", in O'Dowd's lines: "Is there behind all men that live/One all-containing soul,/Whose symbols, apt for each one, give/a transcript for the whole?"<sup>48</sup> And Baughan too, as we shall see, takes up Hegelian ideas, probably, like O'Dowd, first encountering them through Carlyle, Emerson or Whitman. One phrase of O'Dowd's especially, "the revolutionary functions of true poetry", links him in spirit to Baughan's allegories. And there can be no doubt about the source of his inspiration:

I hold that the real poet must be an Answerer, as Whitman called him, of the real questions of the age. . . The wonderful stimulus of my communion with Walt Whitman . . . implanted in me a sense of both the real meaning of democracy and of the revolutionary functions of true poetry.<sup>49</sup>

Perhaps the only other Australian poet in some ways parallel with Baughan is Christopher Brennan, who shares her concern for the reconciliation of the self and the Absolute. And they have in common too a sense of organic wholeness, observable particularly in his *Poems* (1914). His interest in symbolism, inspired to some extent by the French Symbolists - he acknowledges Mallarmé - is another (just) possible point of comparison, but although Baughan makes use of symbols, there is no evidence that she was influenced directly by the Symbolists. The New World aspirations and surging energy that characterize her allegories are entirely absent in Brennan's

work. His style, mostly retaining rhymed endings, is restrained and conservative:

the hollow crystal of my winter dream  
and silences, where thought for worship, white,  
shimmer'd within the icy mirror-gleam,  
vanishes down the flood of broader light.<sup>50</sup>

Another way in which Baughan is at one with much Australian colonial poetry and prose is in her bias towards commonplace objects and undistinguished personae. She had the example of Lawson's uncompromisingly realistic short stories and his determined localism. And in this, she may have owed something to Mary Gilmour - at least Gilmour would have said so - for she claims to have helped direct Lawson towards a concern for local colour and interests.<sup>51</sup> Baughan's own background no doubt helped direct her to an empathy with social outcasts, just as the Australian connection with its penal colony beginnings was no doubt a factor in the frequent elevation of outcasts and swagmen to protagonist level in Australian literature - in for instance, the ballads of "Banjo" Paterson and the stories and poems of Henry Lawson.

But this characteristic owes something, too, to the the New World ethos of America. Emerson's insistence on "the worth of the Vulgar",<sup>52</sup> (an evaluation he admired in Plato, see "Plato", *Essays*, p. 398), Whitman's all-inclusiveness in his poems, and Mark Twain, via his naive narrators, Tom Sawyer (1876) and Huckleberry Finn (1885), had given an early lead to what could be considered material for New World literature.

(iv) The New England Influence.

(a) Making Connections.

Lawrence Jones has noted that "the influence of the nineteenth-century Americans tends to be overlooked in late Victorian New Zealand, but it was there" (*Barbed Wire and Mirrors*,<sup>53</sup> p. 187). He mentions Longfellow appearing beside Tennyson in Athenaeum libraries, and comments that Whitman was as much a presence to Blanche Baughan as Tennyson was to Bracken or Browning to Domett. Jessie Mackay backs up Jones's observation with her poem, "The Death of Longfellow".<sup>54</sup> Baughan, we noted, alluded to one of Emerson's poems in "The Conquering Coward", a ballad apparently written in 1903. Mackay, as we shall see, wrote a series of newspaper articles on Whitman three years later.

Four volumes are particularly helpful in tracing the provenance of Baughan's ideas: her personal copies of Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, his *On Heroes*, Emerson's *Essays and Representative Men*, and Whitman's *Democratic Vistas and Other Papers* (see appendix, pp. 257-258). They are relevant not only in themselves as source material for the allegories, but for the occasional marginal notes in Baughan's handwriting, which I shall detail presently, suggesting parallels in other works.

Two of Whitman's Essays, "Democratic Vistas" (*Poetry and Prose*, pp. 929-93) and "Carlyle from American Points Of View" (*Poetry and Prose*, pp. 890-9) appear to be significant precursors of Baughan's "New Worldism" (I will define the term presently). The "newness" in her allegories is closely attuned to Whitman's concept of a New World poetic as advocated in "Democratic Vistas". The two main ideas in that essay are, firstly, a call for a new indigenous literature relevant to "the rude rank spirit of the democracies",

and secondly, that idealism<sup>55</sup> should provide the foundation for a new world literature, "giving hue to all" (*Poetry and Prose*, p. 984). One of the main ideas that Whitman took from idealism (and which appears to be echoed in Baughan's allegories) is found in his explanation of Hegel's theory of world evolution, reduced to its basics in Whitman's summary:

[All things] form a complication, a succession of steps in the one eternal process of creative thought . . . A curious, triplicate process seems the resultant action; first the Positive, then the Negative, then the product of the mediation between them; from which product the process is repeated and so goes on without end.<sup>56</sup>

It is a theory that accepts negative forces, or "evil", as essential to progress. Interpreting the American Civil war in the light of Hegelian dialectic, Whitman writes, "I know not what these plots and wars and deferments are for, I know not fruition's success, but that through war and crime your work goes on and must go on".<sup>57</sup> Roger Asselineau points out that in Hegel, Whitman found the explanation of "the discontinuity and convulsions of the becoming". "Up till then", he adds, "[Whitman] had to deny evil in the present or in the future; now he could boldly affirm its necessity and accept its existence without despair".<sup>58</sup> We will note in Baughan's allegories a similar attitude, justifying imperfection as an inevitable facet of progress.

In "Carlyle from American Points of View", Whitman offsets Carlyle's pessimistic prognosis for humanity with Hegel's "far more profound horoscope-casting" (p. 890). The "think big" requirement of a holistic philosophy, its in-built optimism and its empathy with democracy seemed to Whitman to express "New Worldism" as he wanted it to be. In the essay referred to, he replaces Carlyle's faith *exclusively* in the curative power of "first-class individual men" as rulers, with a faith in "the general movement and result of ideas", especially in democracy. Whitman insisted that a new

world poetic should "inspire itself with science and the modern" (*Poetry and Prose*, p. 979). For him, the overwhelming contribution of science was the theory of evolution. He saw Hegel's notion of a "constant becoming" as consistent with that theory. For Whitman, Hegel solved the dilemma of the theory of evolution *versus* religion. He saw in Hegel the theory of evolution virtually *as* religion: "Theology, Hegel translates into a science" (p. 897). And he read into Hegelian concepts a justification for freedom. Durant explains the logic of such a justification: " [since, according to Hegel, change is imperative], the deepest law of politics is freedom - an open avenue to change; history is the growth of freedom, and the state is, or should be, freedom organized" ("Hegel", p. 324). Whitman considered Hegel's formulas "an essential and crowning justification of New World democracy . . . " (p. 897). These ideas seemed so precisely to fit his concept of "New Worldism" that he considered it "strange" that they were conceived in Germany, "or in the old world at all" (p. 897). Presently we will observe a similar emphasis on freedom, democracy, and the "constant becoming" in Baughan's allegories.

We can assume, from her degree in classics, her stated empathy with Plato,<sup>59</sup> and her apparent interest in Hegel's work, that Baughan was aware of two important components in transcendentalist writing: its inherent Platonism, and the input from German idealism. And specifically, in Whitman's "Democratic Vistas", she had a suggested application of these ideas to a New World poetic. As well as textual clues, her occasional hand-written cross references to Whitman, Hegel, Plato, and others in the margins of her copies of Carlyle's *Sartor* and Emerson's *Essays*, suggest that three idealist-derived notions are particularly relevant to the "modern" elements in her work. Baughan's "be thou new!", anticipating Modernism's catch-cry "Make it New!", may be seen as a literary interpretation of Hegel's concept of the world as a "constant becoming". Her interest in the idea of perception may

relate to the theory common to the idealists, but initially proposed by Kant, of the subjectivity of perception.<sup>60</sup> Recurring sight/vision/perception imagery in Baughan's work suggests her absorption of an idea central to a transcendentalist view of things, and made much of by Emerson, in his emphasis on the responsibilities and creative powers of "the eye of the beholder". In "Maui's Fish" Baughan proposes "new sights to new sight,/a new world to new eyes,/To discoverers, discoveries!" (p. 59).

The idealist's subjective view of the world filters into New England literature in a new emphasis on the subjective experiencing eye: "I celebrate myself", boasts Walt Whitman, in the opening line of *Leaves of Grass*. And subjectivism re-emerges in New Zealand colonial/Edwardian poetry in Baughan's fusion of personal allusion and allegorical elements in the unfolding colonial story.

Baughan owned several books on Hegel's philosophy.<sup>61</sup> There is no hard evidence as to the extent of her knowledge of it, but a comment by her one-time friend and neighbour seems significant: "[Baughan] used to say that her mystic experiences convinced her that Herr Hegel was right" (see appendix, p. 259). And the anecdote mentioned earlier, concerning a German-speaking parrot, "Herr Hegel" (appendix, p. 261), suggests that Baughan was at least familiar with that philosopher's prolixity. But she need not have gone far into the original works, for all the ideas that contribute to her New World psyche were available to her at second hand via the American Transcendentalists and Carlyle, as well as in the writings of Hegel-inspired philosophers, such as Josiah Royce.

Baughan's personal copy of Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* was published in 1887 when she was an undergraduate at London University. She appears to

have been aware of Carlyle's work and of New England writing long before her dramatic entry into mysticism. Several of her poems in *Verses* suggest, as we have seen, that she was already familiar, in 1898, with some central transcendentalist concepts. Further evidence of her interest in certain key ideas in transcendental writing is supplied by her occasional margin notes, mentioned above. For instance, in her copy of *Sartor Resartus* ( p. 62), alongside Carlyle's comment that Nature is "not an aggregate but a whole", she adds two quotations - one from Emerson's "The Over-soul" - "within man is the soul of the whole",<sup>62</sup> and Hegel's famous maxim, "*Das wahr ist das Ganze* " (The true is the whole).

Comments written in her copy of Emerson's *Essays* suggest that she was well aware of the German idealist provenance of certain key ideas in Emerson's work.<sup>63</sup> Baughan's classical education gave her the depth of perspective to draw parallels from the ancient world with latter-day transcendentalist writers. It is obvious from her comments and underlinings that she was very familiar with Emerson's essay, "Plato; or, The Philosopher".<sup>64</sup> And in *Sartor Resartus* she sees connections between Carlyle's idealist-inspired emphasis on "The Everlasting Now" and a similar emphasis in Plato's work.<sup>65</sup> The transcendentalist emphasis on the *present* has an obvious literary application. It discourages a nostalgic dwelling on the the past, specifically on the literature of England. In her *Sartor* (p.115), she makes a page reference to Whitman's "Democratic Vistas", the essay in which he makes a vigorous call for struggle against the dominance of Old World culture.

Baughan's apparent ability to single out key ideas from a variety of sources and eras, to make connections between them and, more importantly, to recognize their relevance to an indigenous poetic, is significant. All these

ideas may be subsumed into a transcendentalist concern for a new way of seeing. Baughan's conscious effort to look afresh is a key to the peculiar brand of New Worldism that enters New Zealand literature via her colonial allegories. In her own words, (on transcendentalist "seeing"): "[It is] to gain a new world, because a new view of the world". Springing from this understanding comes an attempt to find a new way of saying.

Baughan claimed an awareness of an "essential relation between poetry and philosophy".<sup>66</sup> What were these philosophical ideas, and what is their relation to a new indigenous poetic?

#### **(b) Major Ideas of the Time.**

In the long view, Baughan's call for a new and relevant poetic can be seen, at least in part, as a minor, local, and somewhat belated off-shoot of a liberalizing movement in literature that had its roots in French Utopianism and the doctrine of the open mind that was the core of New England Unitarianism. From that doctrine evolved the transcendentalist movement, the generator of the literary renaissance in nineteenth century New England.

"Transcendentalism" as it applies to Baughan's allegories refers to that particular doctrine adopted by the movement in New England under the leadership of Emerson, influenced by Platonism and German Idealism and reacting against dogmatic rationalism. I am not concerned in this thesis with the vast complexities of idealist philosophy. My interest is confined to Baughan's interpretation and literary application of certain fundamental idealist concepts to an emergent colonial poetic. Although, apart from the clues mentioned, there is no evidence of the extent of Baughan's knowledge of German idealism,<sup>67</sup> she appears, at least, to have grasped its central ideas.



Interest in Hegel and Hegelianism enjoyed something of a revival in the first decade of this century.<sup>68</sup> Baughan's personal acquisition of several books on Hegel, mentioned earlier, supports the trend. She was aware, we noted, of Whitman's essay "Carlyle from American Points of View", in which he expresses great enthusiasm for certain of Hegel's ideas. It is quite possible that this very essay which introduced her Australian contemporary, Bernard O'Dowd, to Hegel, was her direct path to Hegelism as well. O'Dowd, we remember, wrote (in 1890), that reading Whitman's essay on Carlyle, "caused me to study Hegel".<sup>69</sup> "Idealism", in the context of this thesis, may be briefly summarized as:

The name given to a group of philosophical theories that have in common the view that what would normally be called 'the external world' is somehow created by the mind. Idealism does not quarrel with the plain man's view that material things exist; rather, it disagrees with the analysis of a material thing that many philosophers have offered, according to which the material world is wholly independent of minds.<sup>70</sup>

An interest in Kant was sustained throughout the nineteenth century: "Never has a system of thought so dominated an epoch as the philosophy of Immanuel Kant dominated the thought of the nineteenth century".<sup>71</sup> One aspect of Baughan's newness is her interest in perception, and her recognition, implicit in the texts, of the subjectivity of perception. Whitman was very excited by what he calls "Kant's tremendous and unquestionable point", namely, "that what we realize as truth . . . is not the absolute but only the relative truth from our existing point of view. . . ." <sup>72</sup> He absorbs the idea into his own work, for instance, "May-be the things I perceive . . . [are] only apparitions, and the real something has yet to be known" ("Of the Terrible Doubt of Appearances", *Calamus, Poetry and Prose*, p. 274). Baughan would have been aware of a similar idealist-derived idea governing *Sartor Resartus*

the difference between Appearance and Essence. Carlyle invests his persona, Professor Teufelsdröckh, with an amusing "Philosophy of Clothes", in reality an elaborate running metaphor for this concept. Carlyle readily acknowledges his German idealist source.<sup>73</sup>

From transcendentalism Baughan absorbs a concept of the One/the Whole, or as Whitman sometimes called it, "ensemble": "I will not make poems with reference to parts,/But I will make poems, songs, thoughts, with reference to/ensemble" ("Starting from Paumanok", *Poetry and Prose*, p. 183). This idea too, Whitman draws from German idealism, specifically from Hegel, as he acknowledges in "Carlyle from American Points of View". I noted earlier Baughan's post-1905 fixation with the notion of the "one-ness" of all things. This appears to be the main idea behind her remark, mentioned above, that her mystic experiences convinced her that "Herr Hegel was right". Baughan's consciousness of one-ness comes through not only in the allegories, but in some of her letters. For instance, she writes to J. C. Andersen:

. . . whenever one can unify knowledge, can perceive things widely differing on the surface to mean the same at heart not only is the reason delighted, but life itself is a richer & a more joyous thing.<sup>74</sup>

Baughan had probably encountered a similar concern for a holistic overview in her classical studies. Embodied in the golden mean of Aristotle, for instance, is the concept that "the knowledge of opposites is one".<sup>75</sup> Hegel was an ardent classicist. "At the name of Greece," he wrote, "the cultivated German finds himself at home".<sup>76</sup> Aristotle's idea is recycled in Hegel's thesis that "every condition of thought or of things . . . leads irresistibly to its opposite, and then unites with it to form a higher or more complex whole". This "dialectical movement" runs through Hegel's writings.<sup>77</sup>

As well as the impact from German idealism, another relevant factor operating from about the mid-nineteenth century was the great upsurge in interest in matters of religion and morality. In Britain Carlyle, Ruskin, Arnold and Morris spent much time and ink on their solutions for a morally improved nation. In 1832, Emerson, then a young Unitarian minister, resigned his post in Boston, and travelled to England. His meeting there with Carlyle had a lasting effect on his work.

Baughan's familiarity with certain Carlylean ideas was surely a pre-disposing factor in her easy assimilation of New England transcendentalist writing. Indeed, as Tony Tanner points out, it is permissible to suggest "that three of Emerson's key ideas received tremendous impetus from Carlyle's work".<sup>78</sup> The utopian iconoclasm to be found in "A Bush Section" and "Maui's Fish" extends to the antipodes the mood established in the social criticism of Carlyle, Ruskin, Arnold and Morris in England, and reiterated by the New England Transcendentalists.

### (c) Baughan's Empathy with Carlyle and Emerson.

Several of Baughan's comments link both men with New Zealand. First I will consider the Carlyle connection. I mentioned that Baughan owned an 1887 publication of *Sartor Resartus*. Colonial interest in Carlyle received a slight boost around the turn of the century with two local publications. The first was Professor Macmillan Brown's *Carlyle's Sartor Resartus a Study* (Whitcombe and Tombs, n. d., 168 p.). M. H. Holcroft reminds us that Carlyle had then "not been dead long enough to fall into neglect: he was still the Sage of Chelsea, his books plentiful in all the best shops, though moving gradually towards the top shelves". Holcroft himself claims a long-standing interest in "that rugged, dyspeptic and exasperating Scot".<sup>79</sup> Baughan's contemporary

versifier, Dugald Ferguson, was sufficiently impressed with Carlyle to write a long poem in his honour. He describes the sage as one "who ruled supremely in the realm of mind" and adds that "his name and genius reached to realms afar".<sup>80</sup>

Macmillan Brown's little book was soon followed by James Hight's *Introduction and Notes to Carlyle's Sartor Resartus* (Whitcombe and Tombs, n.d.). Hight was known personally to Baughan. He is one of "several generous and helpful critics" acknowledged in the preface of *Shingle-Short*. It is not known if Baughan read these publications, but it appears that she found several underpinning ideas in the *Sartor* particularly relevant to the colonial literary situation as she saw it. Perhaps the most significant one is paraphrased by Macmillan Brown as, "the energy of existence must struggle tirelessly with its disintegration, and out of the disintegration the energy must come" (p. 73). The "Beauty from Ashes" metaphor - with many variants - suffuses her work. It has obvious application to the rejuvenation of the arts from a period of stagnation and disintegration. The other notion offered by the *Sartor* that is particularly significant to Baughan's program is its emphasis on the HERE and NOW (accorded capital-letter status by Carlyle), the *living* link of current humanity, in the arts, the cutting edge of change. For a *specific* connection between Carlyle, the notion of the *living* link, and New Zealand, we must turn to her prose. In her essay, "Summit Road", Baughan draws a parallel between her impressions when viewing Christchurch (New Zealand) from the Port Hills and the impressions of Carlyle's persona, Teufelsdröckh, as he surveyed from a high vantage point the struggling humanity of his native "*Weissnichtwo*". She brings Carlyle's strong emphasis on the HERE and NOW to the antipodes by quoting Teufelsdröckh's words, ". . . Friend, thou seest here a *living link* in that tissue of History, which inweaves all Being".

(my emphasis). She adds, "Yes, Teufelsdröckh would have enjoyed this view of Christchurch from the Summit Road".<sup>81</sup>

Several of those whom I interviewed for first-hand impressions of Baughan, described her as "a battler" (see appendix, p. 256). Baughan's empathy with Carlyle is highlighted by her appreciative "Moi", written in her *Sartor*, alongside Teufelsdröckh's comment, ". . . victory is only possible by battle" (p. 115).

Baughan appears to have found a particularly close empathy, too, with Emerson's writings. It is hardly surprising that Baughan, a self-declared mystic, should relate personally to certain passages expressing visionary concepts. The most dramatic example of this is her apparent association of her own transcendental "illumination" at Chorlton with Emerson's ". . . there [is] no bar or wall in the soul where man, the effect, ceases, and God, the cause, begins. The walls are taken away " ("The Over-Soul", p. 161). She highlights the passage with her idiosyncratic triple scrawl, and she writes "Chorlton !!" above it. This appears to be an allusion to her 1905 experience. Baughan had described a similar blurring of identity in her "rough verses" recording the event. As well, Emerson's appreciation of Plato's mysticism aroused close empathy. I noted (in endnote 64), that alongside Emerson's comment that "Mysticism finds in Plato all its texts" (p. 389), Baughan wrote, "also B.E.B.". She claimed in later life to have remained "deeply at one" with Plato (Letter to W. F. Alexander, 20/3/1937).

Baughan found her inherent tendencies to originality and iconoclasm strongly supported in Emerson's writings. His essays are surely a fertile breeding ground for potential iconoclasts. Whitman says of Emerson:

The best part of Emersonianism is, it breeds the giant that destroys itself. Who wants to be any man's mere follower? lurks behind every page. No teacher ever taught, that has so provided for his pupil's setting up independently - no truer evolutionist.

("Emerson's Books, the Shadows of Them", "Notes Left Over", *Poetry and Prose*, p. 1055).

It is not surprising to find certain of Emerson's mandates highlighted by Baughan's triple underlining: "Insist on yourself; never imitate. Your own gift you can present every moment with the cumulative force of a whole life's cultivation; but of the adopted talent of another, you have only an extemporaneous, half possession" ("Self-Reliance", *Essays*, p. 50). We can hardly be surprised that she underscores as well, his " . . . when you have chosen your part, abide by it, and do not weakly try to reconcile yourself with the world" ("Heroism", p. 154). In her writing she risked the ire of her critics, just as in life she was frequently offside with local authorities, through her stubborn refusal to "reconcile [herself] with the world".

#### (d) Whitman in the Antipodes.

We saw in chapter one that Baughan included readings from Whitman at her dramatic/literary "evenings". She acknowledged her preference for the free verse style of the Whitmanic Chants to conventional rhymed verse, though her stated preference was a compromise between Whitmanesque free verse and the melody of the lyric form.<sup>82</sup> Baughan's copy of *Democratic Verses* has a well-thumbed appearance. Her apparent interest in Whitman may be seen as part of the small but growing interest in the poet in New Zealand and Australia during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Perhaps the earliest recorded admirer of Whitman in New Zealand was Professor J. Macmillan Brown, head of the Department of English in what was

then Canterbury College in Christchurch. According to A. L. McLeod, Macmillan Brown claimed to have visited Whitman in Camden, New Jersey in 1875, and to have written an article on him for the *Christchurch Press* in the following March or April, but there appears to be some doubt about these claims.<sup>83</sup> However, he describes a meeting with Whitman in 1884 in his *Memoirs* (pp. 162-167), published posthumously in 1974. Whitman studies were encouraged and advanced by W. H. Trimble, librarian at Hocken Library, Dunedin, and also by Annie E Trimble, his wife. Trimble records that he first read Whitman's poetry in 1896, and was greatly impressed with it. He lectured on Whitman to various groups in Dunedin in 1903 (McLeod, p.16). In the same year the *New Zealand Illustrated Magazine* published an article by Edward Kempe: "Walt Whitman's 'Drum Taps' and Notes on the War" (Feb. pp. 377-84). Three years later, Baughan's friend and "helpful critic" Jessie Mackay wrote three extensive articles for *The Otago Witness* (Dunedin): "Two poets of the Peoples' Cause", contrasting Whitman and his young Australian admirer, Bernard O'Dowd. They were published on Oct. 24 (p. 69), Oct. 31 (p. 69) and Nov. 7, 1906 (p.85) and reprinted together in A. L. McLeod's *Walt Whitman in Australia and New Zealand*, (pp. 143 ff.).

In Australia, Tom Bury, a columnist for the *Ballarat Courier* in the 1880's, was probably the first serious disciple of Whitman (McLeod, p. 9). His articles on the poet were to arouse in young Bernard O'Dowd a similar enthusiasm for the American "poet of democracy". Whitman found most favour in Australia with the rising generation of young literary men.<sup>84</sup> Hugh Anderson tells us that it was 1885 when Bury introduced O'Dowd to Whitman's *Drum Taps*. Apparently it became O'Dowd's habit to take long walks and read Whitman's poems. His diary for 1888 always notes when he had been "reading Walt" (*Bernard O'Dowd*, p. 24).

We have seen that the theory of evolution appealed to Whitman. It appealed also to O'Dowd. For both men it had a literary application. Evolution seeks new forms. Its urge is to move forward, developing its successful lines, discarding its obsolete. O'Dowd writes, "The fact of evolution and the fact of Australia make Australian poets, if they will, essentially poets of the dawn - poets whose function is to chart the day and make it habitable - marching poets, working poets, poets for use, poets militant" ("Poets Militant", in *Collected Poems of Bernard O'Dowd*, (Melbourne: Lothian, 1944, p. 9). O'Dowd highlights his empathy with Whitman by ending his poetry manifesto ("*Poets Militant*", pp. 31-2), with a quotation from Whitman's "The Answerer", describing it as virtually summarizing his case:

The words of the true poems give you more than poems,/They give you to form for yourself poems, religions, politics . . . and everything else, . . . Whom they take, they take into space, to behold the birth of stars . . . To launch off with absolute faith, to sweep through the/ceaseless rings, and never be quiet again.

Whitman's reception in the antipodes, even by his admirers, was by no means uncritical. In *Hermes* magazine (University of Sydney, July 31, 1903, pp. 14-16), H. M. Green writes: "His revolt from precedent as a reason, is good; but he revolts from all precedent. He overturns artificiality; only unfortunately he overturns with it, art. In short, Walt Whitman is what Kipling would call 'another good man gone wrong.'" In New Zealand, in the N.Z.I.M. article (1903) mentioned above, Edward Kempe comments, " . . . Even the determined admirer catches himself asking 'Is this really poetry? At least can one distinguish it from eccentric prose'? . . . [Whitman's] prose rambles into poetry, his poetry into prose."

It is hardly surprising, since Whitman was an influence, that Baughan's work sometimes evoked a similar critical response whether pro or con. She



was sometimes praised for a [Whitman-like] ruggedness, at other times, despaired of for a [Whitman-like] refusal to conform. Compare, for instance, Kempe on Whitman, above, with Christchurch *Press* editor, A. G. Stephens, on Baughan: "Miss Baughan's verse has already run halfway to prose - more than halfway in some passages of 'Shingle-Short,' which are neither fish nor flesh, however good Miss Baughan" (13/3/1909, p. 7).

**(e) Literary Spinoffs: "New Worldism", Baughan's Stepping-Stone to Modernism.**

The major movement in the arts in the first decade of the century was, of course, the gravitation towards a conscious break from artistic traditions of the past - the movement that reached its full flowering in Modernism. Baughan's refusal, in the allegories, to be held to conventions of scansion and "poetic" language are manifestations of a move *en route* - not to Modernism, but to a relative "modernism". So too are the realism of her metaphors and her concern with perception.

Baughan is pushed from behind by the example from New England, and laterally by the new Australian writing, and makes tentative steps towards the sensibility of the new - Modernism. In fact this progression is but a logical step, for Pound's "Make it New!" - the catch cry of the incoming poetic - merely restates for a later generation what Whitman had urged for literary America in his essay, "Democratic Vistas", and the term "New Worldism", as Whitman uses it in that essay, embodies many of the characteristics associated with Modernism.

One of the most significant passages underlined in Baughan's copy of Emerson's *Essays* is the one quoted above, insisting on originality: "Insist on yourself; never imitate . . .". She would have found a similar emphasis in "Democratic Vistas" in which Whitman demands "original archetypes in literature" (p. 972), extrication from the past, and an embodiment of "the rude rank spirit of the democracies" (p. 944). Some reviewers, in 1908, recognized the "rugged" quality of Baughan's *Shingle-Short* poems as of the new age. The London *Daily Telegraph* review, for instance, makes a parallel between the new "ruggedness" in "Mr" Baughan's *Shingle -Short* and the deliberate lack of polish of the great Modernist sculptor, Rodin:

Mr B. E. Baughan's new volume . . . is the most notably individual expression of poetry which we have had to welcome from New Zealand; . . . There is a ruggedness in the versification which may jar upon those to whom smoothness is the first essential . . . As in sculpture a score of clean-rounded busts are scarce noted beside one rugged example of the work of M. Rodin, so in poetry much of the technically faultless rhyming of magazine poets impresses us far less than the irregular rhythms of a writer such as Mr Baughan . . .<sup>85</sup>

The "ruggedness" of "Mr" Baughan's versification subscribes to the ruggedness Whitman advocates for his proposed new American poetic. It is an important aspect of his "New Worldism". But what does Whitman mean by "New Worldism"? In the first place, as we have seen, he means a demand for relevance. In "Democratic Vistas" he writes: "We see that almost everything that has been written, sung or stated, of old . . . needs to be re-written, re-sung, re-stated, in terms consistent with the institution of these states" (p. 88). Baughan makes just such a plea via her speaker's recitative concluding "Maui's Fish": "Thou art new; be thou new!" Like Whitman she was acutely conscious of the uniqueness of a colonial literature, as, we noted, she suggests via the words of her pioneer "Grandmother", of "Grandmother

Speaks": "It's good to be in at the sowin' o' seed that's bound to grow, be it cabbage, or a country".<sup>86</sup>

New Worldism implies iconoclasm. In "Democratic Vistas" Whitman writes "[American poetry] must extricate itself from even the greatest models of the past" (p. 69). Nowhere in New Zealand's colonial poetry does this aspect of New Worldism make itself felt more strongly than in Baughan's lines from "Maui's Fish":

With keen sight, with fresh forces, appraise those old grounds  
of their vaunting,  
Dip in deep dew of thy seas what swims yet of their catch,  
and renew it, -  
The rest, fish very long caught,  
Toss it to them!

(Shingle-Short, p. 59).

New Worldism implies a shift of focus from the *there and then* - the literary and historical past of the Old World - to the *here and now* of the New. In "A Bush Section" especially, we will note Baughan's emphatic insistence on the here and now. Baughan's "here" is a colonial bush section and her godhead a new colonial boy "*here* dawning, *here* sent" to "*this*". . . "disconsolate kingdom" (Shingle-Short, p. 86, my emphases). We have noted that her reading included *Sartor Resartus* and *On Heroes*, Emerson's *Essays* and Whitman's "Democratic Vistas". Carlyle, in *Sartor*, makes much of the "Everlasting Now". Emerson stresses the extreme importance of "the Here and Now".<sup>87</sup> In "Democratic Vistas", Whitman insists that the new American poetic should identify with its time and place, that it should be rooted in "the profoundest meanings of that place . . . uttering words and products as from its midst" (p. 68).

Baughan attempts to comply with her inclusion of original antipodean archetypes, Australasian colloquialisms, borrowings from Maoritanga, local place names and "unpoetic" mundane referents. In "Shingle-Short" she attempts to use local idiom as a literary device in its own right. In "A Bush Section" the New Zealand landscape, by which she appears to mean the cultural *status quo* as well as the topographical one, is described as "this rough and raw prospect". She attempts to incorporate this "rough and raw" quality into the style of the poem, as we shall see presently. Her own identification with her chosen "rough and raw prospect" is made plain by her consistent use of possessive pronouns when commenting on things New Zealand, even when discussing national shortcomings (I will return to this point in the following chapter).

"New Worldism" in Whitman's terms embodies democracy. In "Democratic Vistas" he writes: ". . . democracy - supplanting old belief in the necessary absoluteness of establish'd dynastic rulership . . . is the only scheme worth working from" (p. 20). A similar belief is implicit in "A Bush Section". Furthermore, democracy, as Whitman would have it, embodies religion. He demands "a sublime and serious Religious Democracy" (*Whitman: Poetry and Prose*, p. 977). And this combination is implied in Baughan's New World prototype, Thor Reyden, the potential self-made man, who is also "Tool yet Employer/Of Forces Almighty".

Whitman's "New Worldism" supported feminist aspirations. Baughan, one-time Suffragette, would surely have applauded Whitman's declaration of the need for new New World ideals "not of literature and art only - not of men only, but of women" (p. 37). Her character "Janet" in "the Paddock" epitomizes Whitman's New World female type - the woman who will ". . . give up toys and fictions, and launch forth, as men do, amid real,

independent, stormy life" (*Democratic Vistas*, p. 37). And indeed, Baughan herself, in her remarkable personal life, *lived* Whitman's game and independent New World female.

For Whitman, New Worldism is a way of seeing from a determinedly subjective point-of-view. This emphasis comes through strongly in transcendentalist writing generally. Emerson, for instance, wrote that the fault with contemporary attitudes towards the world lay not in the world itself, but in the eye of the viewer: "the axis of vision is not coincident with the axis of things, and so they appear not transparent but opaque."<sup>88</sup> The notion that what we see depends on our way of seeing enters New Zealand colonial poetry most clearly with Baughan's invocation in *Maui's Fish*: "New sights to new sight,/a new world to new eyes,/To discoverers, discoveries!"(*Shingle-Short*, p. 59).

\* \* \* \* \*

Baughan's New World orientation is highlighted when her major poems are contrasted with the English-oriented work of New Zealand poets of the succeeding generation, such as D'Arcy Cresswell, Geoffrey De Montalk and Ursula Bethell. So too, is her relative "modernism". I will note also some points of comparison with the early work of R. A. K. Mason and A. R. D. Fairburn as I consider Baughan next in relation to significant New Zealand poets of the nineteen-twenties and early thirties.

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## Notes.

<sup>1</sup>Berta Burns, "Notes", p. 1. Some excerpts from Baughan's reviews support this comment: "A book to give pleasure . . . A vein of poetry fresh as a runnel in a waste . . . A book of achievement and promise" - *Speaker*; "If Mr Baughan can fulfil the promise shown, he may make for himself a name in literature . . . undoubted genius . . . May do great things" - *Morning Post* "Some of them are exquisite . . . Mr Baughan's name is new to us, but it is sure to become better known" - *Glasgow Herald* (These excerpts are printed opposite the title page of *Reuben and Other Poems*).

<sup>2</sup>*Emerson Complete Works*, Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1903, p.10.

<sup>3</sup>*Brotherhood* magazine (quoted in Peter Simpson's notes), op. cit..

<sup>4</sup>*Vedanta for East and West*, 10/6/1971. 150,948, p. 2 (B. E. Baughan Papers 198, WTU.).

<sup>5</sup>"Grandmother Speaks", *Brown Bread from a Colonial Oven*, London: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1912, p. 33.

<sup>6</sup>*Zealandia: A Monthly Magazine of New Zealand Literature by New Zealand Authors*, ed., Wm. Freeman, 1899.

<sup>7</sup>In the same month the *Critic* appeared. Its editor, Joseph Spence Evison hoped to provide an alternative to Australian periodicals for New Zealand writers. Both these periodicals ceased publication in October 1899, a year before the more substantial *New Zealand Illustrated Magazine* entered the field. "To have a magazine with a distinctive New Zealand colouring" (p. 84), is the declared aim of its editor, Professor Talbot-Tubbs. *Triad*, published in Dunedin, was NZIM's only competition in the early years of the century. It advertised itself as "A Monthly Journal of Literature, Music, Science and Art". In its early years it was mainly reproducing articles direct from English and American literary and art periodicals (it proved the best survivor, running from 1893 to 1934).

In 1901 novelist William Satchell attempted a weekly magazine, the *Maorilander*. He wrote in its first editorial, "We desire our paper to be identified with the country in which it is produced". It lasted seven issues. It did better than *Huiia*, (1903) which hoped to bring into focus "the literary talent which is scattered throughout New Zealand". It managed one issue. There were a handful of others: *The Voice* (1904), *Pioneer* (1905), *Current Thought* (1908), *Citizen* (1908), and *Mirror* magazine (1910).

<sup>8</sup>*The Lyttelton Times*, 8/2/1902, p. 4.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 21/6/1902, p. 3.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 6/1/1908, p. 8.

<sup>11</sup>*The New Zealand Listener*, 12/9/1958, p. 5.

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<sup>12</sup>Letter to Miss Higgins, Chorlton, Banks Peninsula, 21/2/1910 (MS Papers 717, Baughan Collection, Folder 1. WTu).

<sup>13</sup>*The Lyttelton Times*, 9/5/1908, p. 18.

<sup>14</sup>*The Dominion*, Wellington, 16/5/1908, p.12.

<sup>15</sup>Letter to J. C. Andersen, Chorlton, 9/8/1908. Auckland Institute and Museum. Included in box labelled "Johannes C. Andersen Letters to him ca. 1905-46. Originals".

<sup>16</sup>"The Red Page" review of J. C. Andersen's book-length poem, *The Lamp of Psyche* (a long-winded, rhymed scientific tract) disposed of the volume in four lines:

It occurred to that painstaking and verbose person,  
Johannes C. Anderson, to re-write the theory of evolution  
in metrical prose with rimed endings, and the dreary  
result is *The Lamp of Psyche* (Lothian, Melbourne. 2s 6d).

("The Red Page", *The Bulletin*, 4/6/1908).

<sup>17</sup>Jessie Mackay, *New Zealand Rhymes Old and New* Christchurch: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1907.

<sup>18</sup>*Patriotic And Other Poems*. Auckland: Brett, 1900, p. 19.

<sup>19</sup>*Reuben and Other Poems*, p. 88

<sup>20</sup>"Bowen Falls, Milford Sound" in *New Zealand Verse* eds., W. F. Alexander and A. E. Currie (London: Walter Scott Publishing Company, 1906), p. 99.

<sup>21</sup>Introduction, *The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse*, 1960, p. 31.

<sup>22</sup>*New Zealand Verse*, op. cit., p. 47.

<sup>23</sup>"Bellbirds", *Patriotic and Other Poems*, p. 119.

<sup>24</sup>"The Coming of Te Rauparaha" from *Maoriland and Other Verses* (Sydney: The Bulletin Newspaper Company, 1899), p. 10, and "the Dwellings of Our Dead", *ibid.*, pp. 5-7, though conventional in style, impress as genuine attempts to approach their subjects.

<sup>25</sup>*Maoriland and Other Verses.*, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup>*New Zealand Verse*, pp. 68-9.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>29</sup>"London", *ibid.*, p.74.

<sup>30</sup>"Books and Authors", 22/1/1910, p. 9.

<sup>31</sup>16/5/1908, p. 12.

<sup>32</sup>Review reprinted in the *Christchurch Press*, 8/10/1908, p. 7.

<sup>33</sup>"The Red Page", the *Sydney Bulletin* 4/6/1908.

<sup>34</sup>*The Lyttelton Times*, 9/5/1908, p. 18.

<sup>35</sup>*Triad*: A Journal devoted to Literature, Art, Science, & Music (Originally published by Stone and Company, Dunedin), issued in various provincial editions with different local advertisements. Review, 1/3/1910, p. 20.

<sup>36</sup>J. Macmillan Brown, Introduction, *The Lamp of Psyche* Melbourne: Lothian, 1908.

<sup>37</sup>Pinfold's comments appear on the title page of Lawlor's copy of *Shingle-Short* in the Hocken Library.

<sup>38</sup>Review cutting supplied by the Hocken Library [n.d.]. Baughan was frequently assumed to be a man. Her choice of the sexually ambiguous "B. E. Baughan" for all her books, was a deliberate ploy to avoid discrimination (Burns' "Notes"), p. 2.

<sup>39</sup>*The Christchurch Press*, 13/3/1909, p. 7.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>41</sup>There is some confusion regarding the suggested date. The Turnbull reference to this poem (MS Papers 717) suggests ca. 1890, which cannot be correct. Their records state that other material in the volume from which the poem is taken is dated 1887 - 1900. However, the Sydney Library catalogue, as we have seen, gives the time span of the *Bulletin* manuscripts as 1880 (?) - 1910 (?). The Mitchell Library incorrectly gives the year of publication of *Shingle-Short* as 1909.

<sup>42</sup>The former appeared on 8/3/1902; the latter on 6/7/1902 (p. 116).

<sup>43</sup>There is no evidence that it was published. A copy of the manuscript may be found in BAUGHAN, Blanche Edith, qMS P. AUSTRALIAN manuscripts (4v. 30 cm.) WTu.

<sup>44</sup>A perusal of the *Bulletin's* "Red Page" in the early years of this century makes the anthology inclusion (considering its title) a little less surprising, for there seems to be quite frequently a blurring of the separate identities of the two countries as far as literary origins are concerned. Bernard O'Dowd illustrates this smudging of national identities when in his manifesto, *Poetry Militant* he includes "Miss Baughan", "Jessie Mackay", "Arthur Adams" and "Grant Hervey" amongst his list of "Australian" writers, who, when their various talents are combined, "indicate . . . that there is at least prime poetic material in Australia [my emphasis] now, capable of responding, with judicious mingling of powers, to any call a nascent nation could make on it".



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<sup>45</sup>Letter to Miss Higgins, 11/8/1909 (MS Papers 198 Baughan Papers Folder 1. WTu.).

<sup>46</sup>Bernard O'Dowd, *The Collected Poems of Bernard O'Dowd* Sydney: Lothian, 1944, p. 15.

<sup>47</sup>Hugh Anderson, *Bernard O'Dowd (1866 - 1953): an Annotated Bibliography* Sydney:Wentworth Books, 1963, p. 27 (Letter quoted dated March 1890).

<sup>48</sup>Bernard O'Dowd, "The Silent Land", *The Collected Poems of Bernard O'Dowd*, p. 82.

<sup>49</sup>Bernard O'Dowd, "Poetry Militant", *ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>50</sup>From "Poems", *The verse of Christopher Brennan*, eds., A. R. Chisholm and J. J. Quinn, with a biographical introduction by A. R. Chisholm (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1963), p. 95.

<sup>51</sup>Mary Gilmour writes of Lawson:

He wanted to write Revolution. I begged him to write Australia. I talked of the pioneers, of the teams and their names, of the wild horses . . . the Aborigines . . . For three years I constantly fed his mind and helped him. The story of 'The Drover's Wife' is our story.

(W. H.Wilde, *Three Radicals*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 5).

<sup>52</sup>Tony Tanner, *The Reign of Wonder: Naivety and Reality in American Literature* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965, p. 39.

<sup>53</sup>Dunedin: Otago University Press, 1990.

<sup>54</sup>*The Spirit of Rangatira and Other Ballads* Melbourne: George Robertson, 1889, p. 18.

<sup>55</sup>In essence, idealism is a system of thought in which the object of external perception is held to consist of ideas. Various types of idealistic philosophy have been distinguished:

(1) Schelling gave the name "subjective idealism" to the philosophy of Fichte, since in Fichte the world is a posit of the judging subject.

(2) Schelling called his own philosophy (in its middle stages), "objective idealism", for nature, he held, simply "visible intelligence."

(3) Hegel accepted Schelling's classification, turning it to his own uses. Holding subjective and objective idealism to represent thesis and antithesis, respectively, Hegel was able to present his own position, which he called "absolute idealism" as the higher synthesis of those positions.

(William L. Reese, "Idealism", *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1980).

<sup>56</sup>*The Evolution of Walt Whitman* Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1962, p. 58. Whitman makes a similar point in "Carlyle From The American Point of View", *Specimen Days, Poetry and prose*, pp. 890-9.

<sup>57</sup>"By Blue Ontario's Shore", *Enc. Ed.*, p. 298.

<sup>58</sup>"Roger Asselineau, op. cit., p. 58.

<sup>59</sup>"[I have] remained deeply at one with . . . Plato" (letter to W. F. Alexander, Clifton, Sumner, 8/2/1913. W. F. Alexander Ms Papers 473: Folder 1, WTU.).

<sup>60</sup>In Kant's explanation, philosophers hitherto had assumed that 'our knowledge must conform to objects. But all attempts to extend our knowledge of objects have, on this assumption ended in failure'. So he tried a different method of approach. 'We must therefore make trial whether we may not have more success in the tasks of metaphysics, if we suppose that objects must conform to knowledge'. Kant compared his new approach to that of Copernicus. Rejecting the idea that the sun and stars revolve round the spectator, 'he tried whether he might not have better success if he made the spectator to revolve and the stars to remain at rest'. . . . In the same way, some of the properties that we may observe in objects may be due to the nature of the observer rather than the objects themselves. This is indeed Kant's conclusion

(*A Dictionary of Philosophy*, ed., Antony Flew. London: Pan Books, 1979), p. 176.

<sup>61</sup>*The Wisdom and Religion of a German Philosopher: being selections from the writings of G. W. F. Hegel*. Collected and edited by E. S. Haldane. London: Kegan Paul, 1897, and J. M. E. MacTaggart's *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1901 (see interview with Betty Waller, appendix, p. 257).

<sup>62</sup>Emerson, "The Oversoul", *Essays*, p.159.

<sup>63</sup>For instance, she recognizes in his essay "Self-Reliance" (p. 41), a parallel with the Hegelian emphasis on creation as constantly "becoming", for she writes "Hegel" alongside Emerson's words "Power . . . resides in the moment of transition from a past to a new state . . . the soul *becomes*" (his emphasis).

<sup>64</sup>Alongside Emerson's comment that "Mysticism finds in Plato all its texts" (p. 389), she writes, "also B.E.B.". Beneath a passage (p. 395) in which Emerson discusses the central idea in Hindu writings, that "the Great Spirit is single, though its forms be manifold", she comments, "indebted to Plato".

<sup>65</sup>In her copy of *Sartor*, for instance, alongside a passage in which Teufelsdröckh proclaims "The Everlasting Now" (p. 236), there is a hand-written reference number (152d9), to a comment in Plato's *Parmenides*, which translates as "And the 'now' is always present to the one through the whole of being; for it is always now whenever it is".

<sup>66</sup>Letter to J. C. Andersen, op.cit.

<sup>67</sup> We can assume from her notes and comments (in German) on Neitzche and others (MS Papers 198 (2), WTU. ), that she had a good command of the language. She was evidently interested too in another Idealist, Fechner, and refers on several occasions to his animistic philosophy in her essay "Snow Kings of the Southern Alps" - written about the same time as her later *Shingle-Short* poems.

<sup>68</sup> In Italy, Benedetto Croce and Giovanni Gentile presented versions of Hegelianism. In the late nineteenth century American philosopher Josiah Royce was influenced by Hegel. He developed a personal philosophy of absolute idealism in *Religious Aspects of Philosophy* (1885).

<sup>69</sup> The letter (March, 1890), is reprinted in *Bernard O'Dowd*, by Hugh Anderson, (New York: Twayne, 1968), pp. 27-8.

<sup>70</sup> *A Dictionary of Philosophy*, op. cit., p. 149.

<sup>71</sup> Will Durant, Ph. D., in "Immanuel Kant and German Idealism", *The Story of Philosophy: the Lives and Opinions of the Greater Philosophers* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1926, pp. 276-317.

<sup>72</sup> *The Complete Writings of Walt Whitman*, 10 vols. (New York: Putman's Sons, 1902 ), VI, p.185.

<sup>73</sup> In *On Heroes* Carlyle quotes the German transcendentalist philosopher, Fichte: " . . . all things which we see or work with in this Earth, especially we ourselves, are as a kind of vesture or sensuous Appearance . . . under all that there lies, as the essence of them . . . the Reality which 'lies at the bottom of all Appearance'".

(*The Works of Thomas Carlyle: Heroes and Hero-Worship*. London: Routledge. New York: Dutton [1905 (?)], p. 108.

<sup>74</sup> Auckland Institute and Museum Library. Letter, 6/5/1908. Originals in a box labelled JOHANNES C. ANDERSEN: Letters to him, ca. 1905 - 46 Originals.

<sup>75</sup> Durant, op. cit. p. 321.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 318

<sup>77</sup> Durant discusses this "dialectical movement" in Hegel's work , in "Hegel", op. cit., pp. 321-325.

<sup>78</sup> Tanner elaborates: "First, the need for a new attitude of 'wonder' towards nature; second, the conviction that any object, no matter how trivial, was a 'symbol' of God and could serve as a 'window' to 'infinite' if viewed aright; third, the rejection of history in favour of 'the everlasting NOW'". *The Reign of Wonder* London: Cambridge University Press, 1965, p. 9.

<sup>79</sup> "Daughters of the Late Banker", *Islands of Innocence* Wellington: A. H. and A.W. Reed, 1964, p.5.

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<sup>80</sup>"Thomas Carlyle", *Castle Gay and Other Poems* Dunedin: Stone, Son and Company, 1912, p. 137.

<sup>81</sup>*Studies in New Zealand Scenery*, p. 209.

<sup>82</sup>Letter to Miss Higgins, Chorlton, 11/8/1909 (M S. Papers 198, Baughan Papers, Folder 1. WTu).

<sup>83</sup>A. L. Mcleod comments that there is no extant communication between the two men, nor any record of any article on Whitman by Brown in the *Christchurch Press* (*Walt Whitman in Australia and New Zealand: a Record of his Reception* Sydney: Wentworth Press, 1964), p. 9.

<sup>84</sup>By and large, the Australian students of Whitman were young men: O'Dowd was just 24 when he started his correspondence; Gay was 28 when he published his first booklet on Whitman; H. M. Green (1881 - 1963), long the librarian of the University of Sydney, was 22 when he contributed his "First Impressions of Walt Whitman" to the University's literary journal, *Hermes*; and John Le Gay Brereton (1871 - 1933), later Professor of English Literature at the University of Sydney, was 23 when he wrote his "Hints on Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*" for the same periodical. (Mcleod's "Walt Whitman", p. 15).

<sup>85</sup>Reprinted in *The Christchurch Press*, 8/10/1908, p. 7.

<sup>86</sup>*Brown Bread From a Colonial Oven* London: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1912, p. 33.

<sup>87</sup>Emerson, *Complete Works* Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1903, II, p. 11. These volumes will henceforth be referred to as *Works*.

<sup>88</sup>Emerson, *Works*, I, pp. 73-4.

### CHAPTER THREE: BAUGHAN AND THE GENERATION TO FOLLOW.

D'Arcy Cresswell, Geoffrey de Montalk, R. A.  
K. Mason, Rex Fairburn, Ursula Bethell and Robin  
Hyde (pp. 76-91).  
Endnotes (p. 92).

In some ways, at least, Baughan may be seen as the Cresswell of the early 1900s. Signs of a new, original poetry in New Zealand are generally assumed to have appeared in the nineteen-twenties and thirties, the years dominated by Mason, Fairburn, Bethell, Cresswell and de Montalk. A case can be made for making Baughan's *Shingle-Short* the watershed between an aged and teetering Victorian Romanticism and the first faltering steps toward "modernism" in New Zealand poetry - faltering, that is, in results achieved, for Baughan was strong on concept, considerably less so in the consistent execution of that concept in her own work. In this she may be seen as a Cresswell-like figure of the previous generation. The quality of her work is uneven. At her best, she approaches literature, at her worst, she competes with Cresswell, whose worst verse has been described as sometimes approaching "a McGonagal-like sublimity"<sup>1</sup>.

Cresswell, in the introduction of his first (1928) collection, *Poems*<sup>2</sup>, and Geoffrey de Montalk in the Foreword to his *Surprising Songs*, published in 1930,<sup>3</sup> imply that the very untamed and empty nature of the landscape might prove to be a significant generator of an indigenous poetic. In his introduction, mentioned above, Cresswell explains his inclusion of some earlier work "for its interest in revealing to what extent a Colonial poet with little in the first place but an empty, though magnificent environment to urge his pen, may acquire necessary inwardness". De Montalk claims a virulent upsurge of creativity arising from the antipodes:

It may seem strange that there should come from New Zealand one so proudly and loudly claiming the empty throne of the Lords St. Alban, Byron and Tennyson. It is true that in some ways that superb and lovely land is a very bad place. For me it was a Hell from which I fled at the very first possible moment. Yet there, at the outer edge of her being, England's life is in the full clash of growth . . . The world awaits the prince among men who will come and declare himself.

Baughan's bold and forceful vision in "A Bush Section" of a colonial creator/king (with a hint of autobiography) on a divine mission to usher in a new order in the new land, has obvious affinities both with Cresswell's view of himself as a "poetic Messiah" who would lead mankind away from its false gods, and with de Montalk's notion of himself as a poet king bent on a similar divine mission. However, there are some important differences between Baughan and her two successors as to the nature of these false gods, and these differences show Baughan to be far better attuned to the independent spirit of a New World literature as espoused by Whitman in "Democratic Vistas", in effect, "make it yours", and to the basic tenet of Modernism: "Make it New!"

Of course Modernism, as espoused by Ezra Pound, is precisely what Cresswell did not want, as he makes clear in his satiric ditties directed at the Modernists, "Overheard at Delphi"; for example:

Say, Goddess, what's the most profound  
Dark riddle of the Age, I crave 'e?  
"A poem by Mr Ezra Pound  
"Reviewed by Mr Donald Davie!"

(*D'Arcy Cresswell*, Finlayson, p. 105).

He could see no merit in breaking with tried and tested forms. Indeed he makes the confident pronouncement, "At this adult age of our language there can be no new forms, but only those which time has left us as the most

useful, which our duty still is to use well, and without fear of staleness".

Baughan makes a considerable effort in *Shingle-Short* to introduce new forms, or at least new mixtures of old forms, and to capitalize on local idiom. Her attitude to the retention of convention for its own sake is crystallized, we noted earlier, in the symbolism of decomposing fish in "Maui's Fish": "The rest, fish very long caught,/Toss it to them!"

But the most significant difference between Baughan's attitude to the new land, both to that of her New Zealand-born contemporaries and to the poets of the succeeding generation, is her whole-hearted acceptance of it. She "went native", to use her own expression. No doubt her experience of the seamier side of English society made it impossible for her to mythologize a better, grander elsewhere, such as the fondly imagined "Home" of Jessie Mackay.

Cresswell, despite his voluble declarations about a new order of poetry to emanate from New Zealand, betrays his colonial insecurity everywhere in his work. In his thirty-nine sonnets, under the heading "Lyttelton Harbour", for instance, his language is from the Old World, his imagery from antiquity. (On the subject of Cresswell's classical imagery, Roderick Finlayson makes the suggestion, "had Cresswell shared the Maori traditions of some of his countrymen [such as Finlayson], he could have invoked the gods under their Maori names"[p. 78]). Baughan, as we shall see in "Maui's Fish", is able to make use of Maori gods to promote her message.<sup>4</sup> Thirty-six years after that poem was published, Cresswell was still calling Greek mythology to his aid in defining "that strange Antipodean Hades of darkness where I was Born":

But thou, Brief miscreant of midnight and bad dreams,  
 Thou I miscall'd my Country, since the beams  
 Of Phoebus' coming splendour touched my brow,  
 Art vanished quite . . .

("Lyttelton Harbour", X).

Not only are real gods Greek gods to Cresswell, but one gets the impression that good New Zealand speech is English upper class speech, for he records fond memories of his school days at Christ's College [in Christchurch, New Zealand], where "they endeavour to guard . . . the pure sound of our tongue that was left among them".<sup>5</sup> Clearly, Cresswell's Anglophilism is at odds with the concept of an indigenous literature. And despite his declared admiration for Whitman as herald of a new poetic order,<sup>6</sup> Cresswell, in his retention of "poetic" language and archaic imagery - not to mention his reactionary histrionics on the subject of scientific advancement - comes nowhere near Whitman's program for a New World literature.

Nor is de Montalk's exclusive elitism in any way empathetic to a program geared to "the rude rank spirit of the democracies". He writes to Fairburn (in 1926), "I believe in the sacredness of an aristocracy; and I believe in the rottenness and ingratitude of the plebs".<sup>7</sup> Baughan, as we shall see presently, completely subverts such hierarchical notions in "A Bush Section". And, especially in "Shingle-Short", she at least makes an attempt at something answering Whitman's demand for a poetic attuned to the "rude rank spirit" of the democracies in the colloquialisms and vulgarisms of her unpolished colonial cow-hand.



Not surprisingly for a feminist, she presents (via her restless young colonial, Janet), an answer to Whitman's call, in the same essay, for a New World colonial female type capable of launching forth, "as men do, amid real, independent, stormy life" (*Poetry and Prose*, p. 956). But Cresswell, as late as 1936, is still offering up the hoary old chestnut that sees womankind, "the lower human half", in the role of Eve, bent on dragging men down to her level:

But foul their sin if men their spirits sell  
To woman, to the lower human half,  
Whose price of worship is the sickly smell  
Of incense offer'd to the golden calf.

(*Lyttelton Harbour: a Poem*, The Unicorn Press, p. 23).

The same male chauvinism impregnates his much-lauded prose works, *The Poet's Progress and Present Without Leave*.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, in the latter, Cresswell gives the impression that real New Zealanders are male New Zealanders. They are the "they" under observation, whereas female New Zealanders exist only as objects of possession - "their women". As well, Cresswell devoted a considerable amount of his energy to pontifications regarding the iniquities of science and the evil nature of modern inventions. He instructs us from on high on these matters in *Eena Deena Dynamo* (Christchurch: The Caxton Press, 1936).

De Montalk's penchant for aristocratic connections and his romanticism, Cresswell's misogyny, his anti-Copernican flat-earthism, and his ostrich attitude to scientific development, rendered them hopelessly anachronistic as practical contributors to a poetic relevant to the "spirit of the democracies". Baughan as a feminist, democrat and enthusiast for scientific advancement, was at least going with the flow of the New World spirit.

Despite the vast differences in attitude between Baughan and these two who are among those who currently usurp her claim as harbinger of a new poetic, there are some remarkable parallels. Cresswell and de Montalk had a vision. And despite their cranky extremism, one can only admire the tenacity with which they pursued it. De Montalk, a self-styled count, and claimant to the vacant throne of Poland, dreamed of the role of poet king. In a letter to Rex Fairburn, he wrote, "At the back of the written poetry must loom the great spirit, the outrider of the hordes of men, the king proclaiming his kingdom, the atavar bearing his own being as a light against the darkness".<sup>9</sup> Cresswell too saw himself in a messianic role. He declared that out of the antipodes had come a poet saviour who would lead English verse out of its state of decadence. Biographical undercurrents in "A Bush Section" and elsewhere suggest that Baughan may have seen herself in a similar role - that is, as the herald of change to the colony, if not in the flesh, at least in literary form, through her character Thor Rayden, her non-hierarchical, Creator/Changer "king" who would lead his chosen "kingdom" from darkness to light.

Baughan did not make of herself a public work of art as did Cresswell and de Montalk, but like them she had a sense of poetry as a vocation. For much of the ten or so years before her creative muse deserted her, she lived and wrote in a single room in a simple Chorlton farmhouse, and had no other occupation. In this she was virtually unique among her contemporary versifiers, for whom poetry was a spare time occupation. Baughan's vicarious assumption, via her personae, of the role of innovator pre-dates Cresswell's and de Montalk's incarnate versions by fifteen to twenty years. Her seizing on the notion of turning loss to gain, that is, of making the obvious disadvantages of the colony - its rawness and its cultural naivete -

inherent aspects of its indigenous poetic, likewise anticipates her rivals by a similar time frame.

The most telling trait in Baughan's letters and recorded commentary is her consistent use of possessive pronouns in reference to things New Zealand, even when being sharply critical. She writes, for instance, of "*our* tin tabernacles, *our* artless Corinthians" (my emphases). Her comments on her impressions of Britain, which she re-visited in about 1905, suggests that she had indeed made a spiritual/psychological transition to the antipodes:

. . . English people are less formal to those who come from the Colonies - They make allowances for us!! perhaps - perhaps our sense of freedom reacts on them. Pray observe I say 'our' for I never was English by anything but accident; & I rejoice to be taken for 'a Colonial' in England or out of it.<sup>10</sup>

One notes the sharp contrast between her self-inclusive "us" and possessive "our" and Cresswell's distancing "they" and "their" in reference to his countrymen when he looks afresh at his homeland as he returns from overseas:

Their present condition depends on the state of peoples a great distance off, and their communication with these. As yet they have no future of their own.<sup>11</sup>

A good deal has been written about an apparent sense of isolation and spiritual exile expressed by Baughan's New Zealand contemporaries and by the poets and prose writers of the nineteen-twenties and thirties. To cite, briefly, some well-known examples, we may recall Arnold Wall's (1912) image of colonial insecurity, "Upon the giddy edge of the world we cling" ("New Zealand"), or Mason's vision of a "far-pitched perilous hostile place" ("Sonnet of Brotherhood"), or Curnow's two islands that "Shrink in a wind from the world's nether ice" ("Not in Narrow Seas"), or Fairburn's new New

Zealanders who "change the sky but not their hearts who cross the seas" ("Album Leaves"), or Cresswell's summary, in the *Christchurch Press* (27/1/1932, p. 23) dwelling on the problem of the artist whose homeland is remote from the culture to which he is drawn, "the dilemma of the artist who finds himself an outcast at home and an exile abroad".<sup>12</sup>

This heavy emphasis on loss, loneliness, and truncation from cultural roots is, at least, the received impression. But Baughan seems not to have received it. Again, her transcendentalism appears to have been a significant factor in promoting a different reaction, insulating her from the anguish of isolation allegedly suffered by those who preceded her, her contemporary writers, and many of those to follow. In her essay "Snow Kings of the Southern Alps" (*Studies in New Zealand Scenery*, pp. 57-101), Baughan makes it plain that even in the wilderness of the New Zealand back country she has no such sense of isolation. The essay, first printed in 1908, was written in answer to Ruskin's claim that if his favourite haunts in his beloved Swiss Alps were removed from their age-old human and historical associations, and transplanted, to, for instance, "some aboriginal spot in a "New Continent" [such as New Zealand], his enjoyment would turn to despair, the hills would become "oppressively desolate", showing "how much of their former power had been dependent upon a life which was not theirs".<sup>13</sup> Baughan, writing from a high point in New Zealand's Southern Alps, claims no such reaction - and the reasons she suggests are essentially transcendentalist. Emerson's "salvation is visual" comes to mind when we note that she italicizes the word "sees" in this context: ". . . as one stands here upon this rocky vantage point and *sees* this mountain-world, Man does not count". Baughan points out the superiority of a "disinterested" view of Nature which requires a losing sight of oneself, enabling the viewer "to see, in consequence, much further". "It is to gain a new world because a new

view of the world".<sup>14</sup> It is hardly surprising that she did not share the received literary attitude to colonial isolation when she is able to claim a transcendentalist consciousness of the animate nature of all things, so that to her, " . . . the universe is nowhere dead matter, but everywhere alive and active, bright Spirit throughout . . . ." <sup>15</sup> One needs to continually bear in mind, when contemplating her major poems, her consciousness of having a new perspective and the enormous difference it made to her: "It is to gain a new world because a new view of the world". And that perspective not only removes London from the centre of her (cultural) universe, it removes humanity itself from necessarily occupying centre stage, for the soul of the Whole inhabits all forms: "What, must flesh and blood/be soul's one vesture? who would have it so/Not yet hath understood!" ("The Summit Track", *Poems from the Port Hills*, p. 31). Such a view-point is greatly at odds with the usually promoted one, which assumes in colonial and early dominion poets, a conventional human-centred perspective generating a wistful hankering for the cultural advantages of Europe.

Thus Baughan, albeit for different reasons, anticipates Baxter and his circle, including Louis Johnson and Alistair Campbell, who wanted nothing to do with the alleged colonial melancholia which seemed to be suggested in Allen Curnow's introductions to his 1945 (Christchurch: Caxton) and 1960 (Penguin Books (N Z)) anthologies.<sup>16</sup> "The myth of colonial isolation" as a subject for New Zealand verse was dismissed by Baxter as a fiction perpetuated by poets who still thought of London as the centre of the universe. It was certainly not the centre for Baughan, not only for the holistic transcendentalist reasons suggested above, but for her distressing experiences in that city. "Hell", she once wrote, "is a city very much like London".

Although Baughan admits the disadvantages of the colonial situation (implied, for instance, in Thor's "rough and raw prospect"), her recurring motif is of amelioration. Her New Zealand may indeed be "at the end of the earth" ("Maui's Fish", *Shingle-Short*, p. 58), but it is as well "on the rim of the morning", the first to welcome the new dawn. Her transcendentalist acceptance of change and "growing on", encourages cheerful anticipation of the future. Whitman had demanded of a New World poetic that it "bend its vision toward the future, more than the past" ("Democratic Vistas", *Poetry and Prose.*, p. 979). Her sometimes grim personal experience of England and her transcendentalist emphasis on the here and now quite marks her off from New Zealand Anglophiles such as Cresswell who felt he needed to live in two worlds, as evidenced by his remark that "The base of my blood is in New Zealand . . . but the base of my taste is in London".<sup>17</sup> There was no such nostalgic looking back to England for Baughan. She did make several return trips to Britain, and she had the means to return permanently, but, she writes, "I wouldn't stay".<sup>18</sup>

I will now consider, briefly, Baughan in relation to the other significant poets coming to prominence in the nineteen twenties and early 'thirties, those (except for Ursula Bethell), a little younger than Cresswell and de Montalk, who were moving in their various ways towards the creation of something new in New Zealand verse: Mason, Fairburn, Bethell and Robin Hyde. Mason (1905-71), appears to be the first with a distinctively original voice. In his late teens he was surprising his very limited public with macabre pieces like "Body of John" featuring a discharging corpse, a crude but effective antidote to the "poetical" strain of Georgian verse. Others, like "Sonnet of Brotherhood" and "Miracle of Life" display a new tough cynicism. But Mason had not yet quite dispensed with whimsy. One finds among his bitterly laconic poems, lines whimsical enough to have charmed Marris,<sup>19</sup>

"and radiance still shall enhalo shadows on moonlit grass" (from "After Death", in "The Beggar", *Collected Poems*, p. 25). Mason's originality is widely acknowledged. But how original is his "originality"? Some of the striking qualities in young Mason's work are his unexpected preoccupation with death in one so young, and his surprisingly terse and unsentimental expression, seemingly uncluttered by book-learned accretions.

It is ironical that two poets with some genuine claim to "new-ness" in New Zealand poetry of their time, Baughan and Mason, derived considerable inspiration from the ancient world. Baughan claimed a strong empathy with Plato. Young Mason was an admirer of the testy Roman historian whom he calls "that black-hearted, calumniating (but gloriously powerful) bastard Tacitus". Mason imbibed Tacitus, expressly, he says, "to put a bit of malignity in me" (*R.A.K. Mason at Twenty-Five*, Nag's Head Press, 1986, p. 20). Mason, we know, was much impressed with Housman, whose work, he says, he would perhaps prefer over "all the rest of English poetry put together". He writes to de Montalk enthusing over Housman's sparseness, his stoicism and his strength, the very qualities which surprise us in his early poems. Beside Housman, writes Mason, "almost everything else appears either garish and decorative or simpering" (*ibid.*, pp. 20-21). Mason's "Body of John" recalls the gore-for-gore's-sake horrors of Housman's "The True Lover" in which his lady enquires of her beloved: "Oh lad, what is it lad, that drips /Wet from your neck on mine?" and is answered: "Oh like enough 'tis blood, my dear,/For when the knife has slit/The throat across from ear to ear/'Twill bleed because of it."<sup>20</sup> In the study of Baughan's texts in the following chapters, and in the conclusion, I will note examples of her similar attempts, pre-dating Mason's, to shock the prevailing genteel literary establishment.

Housman's influence is obvious in Mason's 1934 collection. Compare for instance, Housman's crabbed lines from "The Culprit" (*Last Poems*, xiv) : "For so the game is ended/That should not have begun./My father and my Mother/They had a likely son,/And I have none" with Mason's typically sour lines from "The Young Man Thinks of Sons": "I'll take care that the lust of my loins never bring to fruition/the seed of a son/who in this nettle-grown kingdom should curse both my sins of/commission/and what I left undone". Is this chronic pessimism a sincere reflection of "the poet's personal vision and situation" as received literary opinion suggests? In view of his preferred authors, it sounds like a learned literary response. Similarly, Mason's persona who bewails the folly of expecting posthumous literary laurels in "The Lesser Stars" seems at odds with the real Mason who leaves his very long (twenty-six foolscap pages) literary letter to de Montalk un-posted, but carefully preserved among his papers (it was published in 1986 (by Nag's Head Press) with the title *R. A. K. Mason at Twenty-Five* .

But, of course, Mason's cynicism had a biographical (and historical) base as well. Indeed there is a remarkable parallel with Baughan, in that both had to overcome a childhood - in Mason's case an adolescence - blighted by family tragedy. Mason was a fifth-former when he was first told that his Father's death, some years previously (in 1912), had been the result of a suicide. J. E. Weir explains the young poet's preoccupation with death as resulting from a combination of circumstances: " . . . his Celtic background, his father's suicide and the loneliness and pain of a sensitive adolescence".<sup>21</sup> And he details later disappointments for the adolescent Mason which "sharpened the cynicism which is detectable even in poems written before 1923".<sup>22</sup>



Fairburn in *He Shall Not Rise* (1930) is at approximately the same stage as Mason in "The Beggar", that is, veering between a conscious dispensing with whimsy and a hankering for the conventionally "poetical". By 1926 Fairburn was aware of "a harsher, less 'poetic' reality awaiting transmutation into verse" (Denys Trussell, *Fairburn*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1984, p. 66). Writing to de Montalk in that year Fairburn advises: "... you must widen your conception of Beauty ... Beauty is just as much to be found (by the searcher) in a dead rat in a gutter or a drunken prostitute as in the orthodox lovely things" (ibid., p. 66). But a letter in the following year seems to undermine his earlier discovery of the nature of Beauty, for he claims that the only lines of his own work that completely please him are the last two of "After", which are surely as fanciful and 'poetical' as any written in the Georgian mode: "But there is peace from clamour,/and rest from jars and dins,/and silence that is sweeter than crying violins" (*Collected Poems*, Christchurch: Pegasus, 1967, p. 100). Presently, we will note a similar vacillation between the extremes of sentiment and harsh reality in Baughan's allegories.

The received view sees the pessimistic strain in Fairburn's (and Mason's) work as an expression of colonial melancholia emanating in part from the general atmosphere of disillusionment arising from the Great Depression. There appears to be some justification for this view,<sup>23</sup> but at least in their early work, these two seemingly-original voices give the impression of trying out a new literary fashion, one that exchanges the excessively optimistic tenor of Georgianism's 'picturesque' strain for its equally excessive pessimistic one, best exemplified in typical Housmanian biliousness:

June suns, you cannot share them  
To warm the winter's cold.

The lad that hopes for heaven  
Shall fill his mouth with mould.<sup>24</sup>

Fairburn's jaundiced view of New Zealanders as "The army of the unliving, cells of the cancer: small sleek men rubbing their hands in vestibules . . . buyers and sellers, retchings/of commerce, spawn of greed; . . . " ("Utopia" in "Dominion" ) distorts reality as wildly as Mason does in depicting New Zealanders/Mankind as "betrayed alike by Fate's gigantic plot/here in this far-pitched perilous hostile place".

More mature, if less original, are Ursula Bethell's poems in *From a Garden in the Antipodes* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1929). Many appear almost too private to be part of national literary history, "almost like a published correspondence", as has been observed. Nevertheless it is in this first volume that we come upon something rare in New Zealand poetry - a non-literary, subtly highlighted, but natural-sounding speech - though Baughan achieved something approaching natural-sounding speech in Janet's monologue, in "The Paddock", decades earlier. Most of these poems focus narrowly on the garden, or on domestic interiors, but some, such as "Pause", presage Bethell's characteristic movement (like Baughan's), from the near at hand, to an infinite, essentially religious overview, as when in that poem, she looks beyond her garden, foreseeing a time when "The Mother of all will take charge again,/And soon wipe away with her elements/our small fond human enclosures". Bethell stays faithful to her Christian inheritance, and its iconography; Baughan does not. Her holistic idealism offers a new view and a new iconography to Edwardian colonials. Bethell's subsequent work, though often beautifully polished, in essence, polishes old icons.

Robin Hyde, although in print a year earlier than Fairburn (*The Desolate Star*, Whitcombe and Tombs, 1929), shows flashes of originality only in her later work, putting it beyond the scope of this thesis. There is almost a thirty-year gap between Baughan's call for an indigenous poetic in "Maui's Fish" and Hyde's earliest stated awareness of a similar aim. In 1936 Hyde wrote to a friend:

. . . as to poetry - right now I want to change from one vein to another - it's just dawned on me that I'm a New Zealander, and surely, surely the legends of the mountains, rivers and people that we see about us should mean more to us than the legends of any country on earth.<sup>25</sup>

It is ironical that the English woman Baughan accepted New Zealand, warts and all, and herself as a colonial, far more whole-heartedly than those currently credited with inaugurating something approaching an original indigenous poetic. Some critics have suggested Baughan's English background as the explanation for her freedom from "the anxiousness of the born colonial".<sup>26</sup> No doubt that was a contributing factor, for she was certainly conscious of the advantages of experience not only of English culture, but of other cultures as well. We noted that she had made several world trips before settling in New Zealand, and we remember her comment written to a young Australian about to embark on her first "Overseas Experience", "little they know of (Australia) who only (Australia) know" (her emphasis). But the perspective provided by a grounding in English and European culture probably had less to do with her ability to "go native" in New Zealand than the plain fact that she was not enamoured of England. One cannot expect a sentimental attachment to things English from a writer who considered herself never English "by anything but accident". In a society whose literary source was Christian, hierarchical and Anglophile, she was non-Christian, democratic/demotic and (at least spiritually), barely English. These facts, together with her inclination towards mysticism, her empathy

with Platonism, and her interest in social reform, make it not at all surprising that she should seek literary inspiration amongst the like-minded, the New England Transcendentalists.

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Tony Tanner has claimed that in encouraging men to "wonder at the usual", Emerson bestowed perhaps his greatest benefit on American literature (*The Reign of Wonder*, p. 45). This directive probably did more than any other to bring about its change of direction from its hierarchical English-orientation to a new locally-focussed demotic one. And it seems significant, too, to the "modernism" in Baughan's work. Emerson's advice finds an empathetic echo in her "Shingle-Short" (in Chapter Four), with its emphasis on the usual, the indigenous and the demotic.

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## Notes.

<sup>1</sup>Peter Simpson's description.

<sup>2</sup>*Poems*. London: Wells Gardner.

<sup>3</sup>*Surprising Songs: an Odyssean Tale in Poetry*. London: Colombia Press, 1930.

<sup>4</sup>Baughan demonstrates her consciousness of the interchangeable nature of gods in her description of Maui as "The Polynesian Hercules, with a certain spice of Mercury, also of Prometheus" (footnote, *Shingle-Short*, p. 43).

<sup>5</sup>*Present Without Leave*. London: Cassell, 1939, p. 17.

<sup>6</sup>"The future for poetry and man lies in the guidance of that mysterious potent force, the personal Ideal, to its proper outlet in society, which so far only Whitman foreshadows, only America expects" (W. D'A Cresswell in "Modern Poetry and the Ideal", originally a broadcast address from 1Y A Auckland N. Z., published in Auckland by The Griffin Press, 1934). The quotation is from p. 17.

<sup>7</sup>W. S. Broughton, "Problems and Responses of Three New Zealand Poets in the 1920s", AULLA, Proceedings of the Tenth Congress, University of Auckland 1966, p. 204.

<sup>8</sup>*The Poet's Progress*. London: Faber and Faber, 1930. *Present Without Leave*. London: Cassell, 1939.

<sup>9</sup>Broughton, op. cit., p. 206.

<sup>10</sup>Letter to Miss Higgins, 21/2/1910. MS Papers 198, Folder 1, Wtu.

<sup>11</sup>*Present Without Leave*, p. 6.

<sup>12</sup>Broughton, op. cit., pp. 212-13.

<sup>13</sup>*Studies in New Zealand Scenery*, p. 57.

<sup>14</sup>Her emphasis in this essay on the animate nature of the apparently inanimate objects surrounding her, suggests the influence of the German transcendentalist, Fechner; indeed she quotes that philosopher at several points, and she consistently encases the word "inanimate" in quotation marks.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 101.

<sup>16</sup>Baxter discussed Curnow's "deeply held personal fiction of the spiritual isolation of New Zealanders" and his "negative pre-occupancy with colonialism" in "Aspects of Poetry in New Zealand", a talk given at Victoria University in 1967 and published in *James K. Baxter as Critic*, ed. Frank McKay (Auckland: Heinemann, 1978). In the article Baxter says "the myth of colonial isolation and inferiority seems to be connected broadly to the theological concept of the Fall of Man - the immigration of our ancestors was, as it were, a second Fall, a departure from a Garden of Eden situated somewhere in Victorian England" (p. 79).

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<sup>17</sup>Interview in the *Christchurch Press*, 26/1/1932, p. 23.

<sup>18</sup>Letter to Andersen, 6/3/1936.

<sup>19</sup>C. A. Marris was a journalist at the *Wellington Evening Post*. He was one of the group of journalists (including Alan Mulgan at the *Auckland Star*, and M. C. Keane and J. H. E. Schroder at the *Christchurch Press*), who from about 1916 became associated with the welfare of local writing in their newspapers. He edited the quarterly, *Art in New Zealand* in 1928, and later, the annual, *New Zealand Best Poems* (1932-43).

<sup>20</sup>Norman Marlow, *A. E. Housman Scholar and Poet* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958, p. 74.

<sup>21</sup>Mason describes himself in his fifth-form year as "a skinny . . . lonely, ill-fitting little wretch" (J. E. Weir, *New Zealand Writers and their Work: R. A. K. Mason* Wellington: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 3.

<sup>22</sup>" . . . the young poet's [cynicism] must have been intensified when his youthful aspirations to an academic career were hindered by his immediate failure to gain entrance to Auckland University College. This experience, and his failure to discover a form of employment more congenial to his academic and literary talents, sharpened [his] cynicism . . . ". *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>23</sup>For instance, J. E. Weir quotes Mason's own account of the early 1920s, " . . . high hopes of the promised post-war land turned to bitterness, as we stumbled into the swamp of the 1924 slump and thence into the morass of the great depression. In the light of such events we [Fairburn and Mason] discussed endlessly matters of war and peace politics and religion, philosophy and the arts, questioning all assumptions, all authority" (R. A. K. Mason, *op. cit.*, p. 10).

<sup>24</sup>From *More Poems* in *A. E. Housman Collected Poems and Selected Prose*, ed. Christopher Ricks, XXII, p. 168. Denys Trussell writes, " . . . By 1927 Rex had read Housman's *Last Poems* and was deeply impressed with them" (*Fairburn*, p. 66).

<sup>25</sup>Patrick Evans, *The Penguin History of New Zealand Literature*, (Auckland: Penguin Books (N Z Ltd), p. 112).

<sup>26</sup>Evans, *ibid.*, p. 37.

## CHAPTER FOUR: "SHINGLE-SHORT".

- (i) Introduction (p 94).
- (ii) The Poem's Transcendentalist Underpinning (p. 96).
- (iii) Literary Spinoffs: "Modernism" in "Shingle-Short" (p. 102). Endnotes (p. 111).

**(i) Introduction.**

The long title poem/monologue (of approximately 1200 lines) bears out Baughan's dual interests, poetry and philosophy. "Shingle-Short" may be read as an oblique commentary on the *status quo* of the literary scene as Baughan found it, and on her suggested remedy: a new, indigenous poetic. It may be read, as well, as an application of a transcendentalist perspective to an antipodean venue and idiom. There is constantly a merging of the two interests: indeed, the poem's dominant symbol, the model boat, represents both literary and transcendentalist concepts.

Baughan's emphasis is heavily on the local. The poem's basic symbol may be translated as a significant literary idea. Her naive narrator's creation - his boat - is crudely constructed from native and local materials. It may be read as an intuition of the basic tenet of modernism emphasised by Pound,<sup>1</sup> "Make it New", and of the coming trend in New Zealand towards an indigenous poetic voice. But it carries as well, transcendentalist connotations, for it may be perceived also as the simple object, which, albeit flawed, leads to an intuition of the divine: "Wreck, you've a-sailed me home to God" (p. 39). Attuning to the divine wavelength via the seemingly unremarkable is underscored in transcendentalist literature. We may recall, for instance, Margaret Fuller's "Are the stars too distant for thee? Look at the pebbles at thy

feet and from them learn the ALL".<sup>2</sup> Shingle-Short's new perception allows him, like Emerson's wise man, to wonder at the *usual*: "Reckon the wet's a-polished the air/Such a shininess everywhere! . . . An' even them mean old milkin-pails/Sunny as silver" (p. 40). The boat comes to be recognized by its maker as imperfect, yet of great significance, for it opens its creator's eyes to a new way of seeing, that is, to an appreciation of the wonders of his *unremarkable* surroundings. It is significant that the crudities of the materials on hand become part of the creation, both in the literal sense - the boat is made of items to hand - and in a wider sense, the ruggedness of colonial idiom becomes a device of literary style in the poem. A literary reading of "Shingle-Short" can extract the meaning that from the antipodes, and specifically from New Zealand, creation can happen, and from *local* ingredients. If the result is crude, well then, that is an authentic aspect of its style. This is precisely the point suggested several decades later by D'Arcy Cresswell, and stated rather more forcefully a little later by Geoffrey de Montalk. In the history of New Zealand literary ideas, it is a breakthrough. Baughan thought of it first.

As well as literary and transcendentalist strands, a third, a biographical strand, is woven into this, as into all the allegorical poems. Baughan's naive cow-hand may be seen, at least in some respects, as her persona, not only in his acquisition of transcendental insight, but in his concept of his role in life as a maker and a changer. Like another semi-persona figure, Thor Rayden in "A Bush Section", Shingle-Short sees himself as marked out by Providence for the role: "Why am I pick'd from all the rest,/To Make?" (pp. 20-21); "Thank God! my order's sent/To heave an' haul things different" (p. 21).

The autobiographical element in "Shingle-Short" backs up Lawrence Jones' assertion that for the writer of New Zealand literary autobiography



"there is one story only, although it may be variously expressed" (*Barbed Wire & Mirrors*, p. 313). The story, he suggests, is that of the artist's struggle to find a place in a hostile provincial environment, a story of defeat and persecution - but also of victory in the achievement of art (even if the art succeeds only in holding up a mirror in which the society could see its unlovely self if it only chose to look). Baughan's "Shingle-Short" lends itself to just such a parable. Here the "hostile environment" and the artist's persecution are symbolized in Shingle-Short's fear of the "Peerin', jeerin'" larrikins (p. 11). The victory of achievement is expressed in his ecstatic "It's done! I done it! an' its Done!" (p. 21). The stony "Boss's wife" mirrors the unlovely face of a society unappreciative of its art, for the confidence of Baughan's creative colonial is destroyed, and his pleasure in his creation is shattered, when he imagines her reaction: "What's the good of it?" (p. 22).

### **The Poem's Transcendentalist Underpinning.**

The influence of transcendentalist/idealist thought and its effect on some of the "new" aspects of Baughan's writing, may be illustrated by a detailed consideration of Baughan's long title "poem" (more correctly, a monologue for live performance). I will take the salient features of transcendentalism and see how Baughan attempts to "indigenize" these concepts in the rugged vernacular of her protagonist.

The realism of Baughan's metaphors is strikingly "new" for the time they were conceived. It is virtually impossible to separate Baughan's transcendentalist perspective from the "realism" of her imagery for the latter may be seen as a spin-off of the former. To illustrate what seems to be a direct link between that perspective and this "new" element of realism in her work, we return to Josiah Royce, a writer known to Baughan. Royce re-makes the

point that had been emphasized time and again by the New England transcendentalists - we may recall Emerson's "the wise man wonders at the usual". As Royce puts it:

Look at the facts as they are. Study them as experience gives them. Know them in their naked commonplace reality. But know also that the ideal Divine Life dwells in them and throughout their whole boundless reality.<sup>3</sup>

Royce's appeal for facts "in their naked commonplace reality" summarizes the philosophical under-pinning that found literary expression in Baughan's baldly realistic metaphors. But Royce simply reiterates a point that Baughan, as a classics scholar, would almost certainly have encountered years earlier. I found in her *Sartor* several handwritten references to Plato's *Parmenides*. Royce reminds us that in the *Parmenides*, Plato has the young Socrates admit to some hesitation to accepting the notion that there is an Idea for everything, *even for mud*. He is told that mud too, is rational. Royce comments, "We must see the Divine everywhere. And therefore we must not be going about faithlessly looking for something that shall be wondrous enough to force us to say 'Here is God'" (*Religious Aspects*, p. 482). A literary parallel to this latter attitude, associating the poetic with the wondrous, and poetic language with an elevated mode of expression, is precisely what was paralysing the *status quo* of new Zealand poetry as Baughan found it. Writers such as her contemporary, Hubert Church, and a good many other contributors to Alexander and Currie's 1906 anthology, for instance, followed the course laid decades earlier by Alfred Domett. It aimed, in both language and content, at what a transcendentalist perspective would recognize as a faithless seeking of the sufficiently wondrous. But it must be admitted that Baughan herself gives way to occasional flurries of elevated, overwrought enthusiasms, though she manages to curb the tendency in this poem. She is, as

I suggested earlier, sometimes better at knowing what needs to be done, than at actually doing it.

A transcendentalist perspective insists that only in the context of the whole, can imperfection and evil be understood. In a chapter of Royce's *Religious Aspects of Philosophy*, to which Baughan makes several page references, we find the line, "Whatever happens to our poor selves, we know that the Whole is perfect" (p.478). This is the basic transcendentalist lesson of the monologue. We noted that Baughan was aware of Kant's famous maxim "the true is the whole". Her recurring motif of the creation of something whole, or good, from something incomplete, or evil, is attuned to the notion of the One's eternal striving for wholeness. For instance, when Baughan's narrator finds the roughly boat-shaped piece of *totara* and decides to make a model boat from it, he exclaims, "Blest if she ain't a half-one now!", and adds, "An makin' of a half-thing whole,/Smells like the savin' o' my soul" (p. 12). Baughan was looking, we noted, for an essential link between poetry and philosophy.

The contemplation of the Whole was important, too, in that it offered transcendentalists a means to rationalize the existence of evil or imperfection in the world. Shingle-Short is at first overwhelmed by his own short-comings and the imperfections of what he sees about him: "The whole caboodle" is "shingle-short" (p.33). But after he perceives Wholeness and his part within that Wholeness, he attempts to express his new understanding in his half-hatched egg analogy: "Fools shouldn't see things half-way through. . . . /A half-hatched egg, ain't that a fright?" (p. 36). In fact, his unflattering nickname seems to have been chosen to make this same point, for, once enlightened, he contrasts his personal shortfall with the wholeness of his God, "You ain't shingle-short! You're whole!" (p. 37). Shingle-Short paraphrases with

tolerable accuracy the transcendentalists' rationalization of evil and flaw in creation, as explained, for instance, by Whitman in his essay, "Carlyle from American Points of View":

According to Hegel the whole earth . . . with its infinite variety . . . [is] to the eye of the ensemblist, but necessary sides and unfolding different steps or links in the endless process of Creative thought, which, amid numberless apparent failures and contradictions, is held together by central and never-broken unity - not contradictions or failures at all, but radiations of one consistent and eternal purpose . . . .

*(Specimen Days , Poetry and Prose, p. 896)*

Consistent with this attitude, Shingle-Short explains his own deficiencies: "A misfit isn't no misfit,/But workin', tho' it works askew,/Pre-cisely how its meant to do" (p. 36). He sees his imperfect state as atoned for by the wholeness of the One: "O Perfeck God! I got my cure! . . . *You're whole! You're workin'!* That pays all!" (p.38).

Baughan attempts to localize the notion of wholeness in an antipodean idiom. Her protagonist claims an uncanny ability to grasp the whole of a situation or issue. He can "see things in the Piece", not, as others do, "in scraps" (p. 27). Shingle-Short expresses his all-embracing grasp of his situation in a plausible rural New Zealand metaphor: "I can fence this little lot" (p.28). He constructs a local simile to express his own lack of wholeness. He is, he says, "Like this old iron-sand hereabout,/Too married up with mucky sand/To pay to get the iron out" (p. 28).

Transcendentalists make much of what they consider the new way of seeing. Emerson compressed the notion in his famous maxim, "salvation is visual". The new way of seeing alters perception. In their literature metaphors of "sight" and "seeing" abound. In "Shingle-Short", when her

narrator recognizes the flaws in his own creation, his boat, he senses a falling of the scales from the eyes, "now my eyes is back again" (p. 25). A little later he explains his new-found perception in another "sight" metaphor: "My word! It seems to take some sight to see if things is wrong or right . . ." (p. 36). This roughly paraphrases Emerson's understanding of the responsibilities and creative powers of "the eye of the beholder". The seeming disunity in the world Emerson explains as, "The ruin or the blank that we see when we look at nature, is in our own eye. The axis of vision is not coincident with the axis of things, so they appear not transparent but opaque" (*The Reign of Wonder*, p. 27).

Central to transcendentalist perception is a consciousness of what Whitman called a "constant becoming". Images of "constant becoming" such as Shingle-Short's half-hatched egg metaphor mentioned above, may be seen as a logical outcome of writing springing from an underpinning principle of change. Baughan would have been aware of this emphasis in Whitman's and Emerson's work. Indeed, in her copy of Emerson's essays, we noted, Baughan had underlined "There are no fixtures in nature. The universe is fluid and volatile" ("Circles", p. 178). "Shingle-Short" is conscious of mutability. He thinks of a flower and comments, "Very same second, like, its sound,/Down the road to rot it's bound". Her insertion of a redundant "like" in the farmhand's explanation is an attempt, at least, to paraphrase the notion in something resembling an antipodean vernacular. A better example is his scaffolding metaphor, representing, presumably, the ultimate plan for the universe - in idealist terms, the One in a constant state of becoming: Shingle-Short sees "the contrack" as "Scaffoldin'-kind o' Right just now,/But clean Right's what it's comin' to!" (p. 37). His "kind o' right just now" may be read as a vernacular paraphrase for Hegel's notion that "every condition, though destined to disappear, has the divine right that belongs to it as a necessary stage

of evolution" (Durant, "Hegel", p. 324). We can assume that Baughan was aware of this notion, if not directly from Hegel, then at least at second hand from Whitman, for she was familiar, we saw, with his essay "Carlyle from American Points of View", in which he enthuses about Hegel's idea that the imperfect or darker side of creation is nevertheless inevitable in the scheme of things, "like shade to light" (*Poetry and Prose*, p. 897).

Perhaps this was another factor enabling Baughan to recognize the rough-hewn characteristics of the colony as *right for their time and place*, and therefore ideal as prime raw material for a *relevant* literature; after all, they surely had "the divine right that belongs to [them] as a necessary stage of evolution". In fact raw, immature, but right for the present, is precisely how she saw New Zealand in the first decade of the century, as can be seen from a comment from her prose sketch, "An Active Family":

It may be with healthy young nations as it is with healthy little boys, that the affairs of the soul interest them a very great deal less keenly than the affairs of the stomach - and, for the time being, rightly so.

(*Brown Bread in a Colonial Oven*, p.141)

Baughan attempts to localize yet another basic transcendentalist notion in the poem. Schiller puts it succinctly in his maxim, "The universe is God's thought expressed".<sup>4</sup> Reflecting on his depressing limitations and circumstances, Shingle-Short intuits, and expresses in a colloquial paraphrase, this concept of the universe as an expression of God's thought. Despite the fact that here in the colony things "isn't all they ought", he concludes (addressing God), that "*still* Your turn-out's like Your Thought" (p. 36, her emphasis). The logical extension to the notion (as he comes to see it) that whatever *is*, is God's "turn-out" or thought, implies that even an imperfect

specimen (such as himself) is as God intended: ". . . workin', tho' it works askew,/Pre-cisely how it's meant to do" (p. 36). This approximates Hegel's understanding that imperfection is a necessary stage in evolution. At another point too, a colloquial expression, "come pat", expresses Shingle-Short's intuition that "the universe is God's thought expressed". He explains the coming into existence of the world: "When that big Thought had all come pat . . ." (p 20).

Although Baughan was in many ways "modern" for her time, she was not, of course, Modernist. She sees poetry as a vehicle for ideas, not as an imaginative act. It can be seen that Baughan retains the Victorian writers' propensity to instruct, and that in "Shingle-Short" the lesson for the day is the basics of transcendental perspective, for all its salient features are imbedded in the poem.

### **(iii) Literary Spinoffs: "Modernism" in "Shingle-Short".**

Some of Baughan's literary innovations spring from two seemingly contradictory traits - her essential localism and her sense of holism, a holism which enveloped an international perspective, and beyond that, a universal one. The title work demonstrates Baughan's determinedly local emphasis (I will examine her use of local idiom in more detail presently). It provides, as we have seen, examples of her attempts to transplant in a New Zealand locale certain ideas absorbed, for the most part, it seems, from American transcendentalist literature. A detailed examination of the literary aspects of "Shingle-Short" will highlight her determined localism. This manifests itself, not only in her attempt to use Australasian idiom as a stylistic feature, and to include specific local referents, but also in the implications for an indigenous poetic inherent in the symbolism of the work.

Considered as a literary work, "Shingle-Short" has a good many flaws. Its literary historical significance lies, to a large extent, in what it attempts. It is well-placed as an introduction to the allegories which follow, since it offers interesting clues to the state of her philosophic understanding at the time. And it demonstrates that such idealist notions as the unity of the Absolute and the justification, or rationalization, of evil were already simmering in her head some years before they burst through in what she saw as a flash of mystical illumination. These central idealist beliefs materialize as well in the text of her spontaneous "rough verses" recording that incident. We will return to them in the chapter to follow.

"Shingle-Short" was probably the first written poem in the volume, possibly as early as 1900-1902, for Baughan tells us that it is based on a real-life New Zealand farmhand, who happened to work on the same Ormondville farm at which she stayed during her first two years in this country. She was intrigued with the simple lad's mix of naivete and spiritual perspicacity.<sup>5</sup> Thus she had before her a living *local* example of the idealized seer figure in transcendentalist literature. According to Whitman, "uninstructed vagaries of the eye are a symptom of health; it is the classifying analytic eye of the educated man which is diseased".<sup>6</sup> For this reason he chose an unlettered vernacular persona (Tanner, p. 66). Emerson extolled "the animal's eye and the child's eye - neither of which have been overlaid with the dust and dirt of custom and second-hand opinion" (ibid, p. 32). "Shingle-Short", the simple-minded cow-hand and solo speaker/performer of the opening dramatic monologue, may be seen as a transplanting in the antipodes of the "naive narrator", the protagonist possessed of a child-like, untutored vision.



The literary significance of the boat, I suggested, is as a metaphor for Baughan's concept of a new and relevant poetic. It is significant that the boat is made entirely from local materials - a *totara* log, with additions from whatever is on hand. Baughan underscores the essentially local nature of its creation in that ubiquitous symbol of Kiwi ingenuity - the ever-useful length of fencing wire - which Shingle-Short produces from inside his boot (p. 16).

The realism of Baughan's symbolism and metaphors answers the transcendentalist demand for "facts in their naked commonplace reality" (Royce). Two such metaphors are of particular relevance to her status as a conscious literary innovator: the "circ'lar saw" and the "bandsaw". Shingle-Short's struggle to create a model boat from a log of wood is perhaps a symbol for creation in an inclement literary climate. He sees himself as a flawed but original creator - perhaps symbolizing Baughan herself. In his description of himself as a band-saw (by implication, capable of cutting at a variety of angles) and his conservative boss as a "circ'lar" saw (literally confined to a rut), we have a precursor to Baughan's plain call, in "Maui's Fish", for a new vision. In the latter poem she calls for a new way of seeing (the transcendental perspective) that will perceive new things: "new sights to new sight" (p. 59), and a new way of saying appropriate to the youth of the colony: "thou art new; be thou new" (p. 59). In "Shingle-Short", the implied directive is to get out of the rut. Shingle-Short's overseers, "Micky an' Boss", translate as representing entrenched conservatism, including literary conservatism. He sees them as non-creative ("never hear they've invented aught" [p.21]). They are churners-out of prescribed orders: "They're circ'lar saws, a-cuttin' planks", "They rides on metal, an' 'tween banks". They are limited to repetition: "Their contrack's labell'd 'As Before'" (p. 21). On the other hand, the narrator is acutely aware of his own free-ranging creative ability: "I'm band-saw, reggular up to pranks". His purpose in life is to make *changes*: "Thank God! my order's sent/To heave

an' haul things *different*" (p. 21, my emphasis). This, surely, is a significant line in New Zealand literary history, a colloquial paraphrase anticipating Modernism's "Make it New". "Heave and haul" suggests that making "things different" will entail struggle (we remember that for transcendentalists/idealists "struggle is the law of growth"). Consistently, throughout the allegories, the idea of growth is accompanied by expressions of extreme effort.

Shingle-Short continues, "So's out o' Nothin' to make Some, . . ." (p. 21). This, I suggest, is how Baughan saw her function at the time of writing : to make changes, to make something of the "Nothin'" - the virtually non-existent indigenous poetic. The creation of something from nothing, or beauty from ashes, as we have seen, was her stated aim in life, both during her creative period, and in her post-literary stage when she turned to social work and applied the phrase to the creation of worthwhile citizens from the down-and-outers of society. In "Shingle-Short" we have the first sounding of Baughan's main message for colonial creators: Change! Be original! Be yourselves!

The realism of Baughan's imagery and idioms transmit first frissons of "the shock of the new" to a jaded, re-hashed poetic. It answers the transcendentalist demand for a seeking of the Divine in the *ordinary*. I have mentioned that Baughan was familiar with Plato's *Parmenides*, with Whitman's essay, "Democratic Vistas", with Emerson's *Essays*, with Carlyle's *Sartor*, and with Josiah Royce's *The Religious Aspects of Philosophy*. In any of these sources she could have met with the idea of the divine nature of everyday facts.

Baughan was impressed with the rawness of the New Zealand landscape, the artlessness of its architecture. She writes of "our tabernacles of tin built among the ruins of the bush".<sup>7</sup> It is quite possible, and in "Shingle-Short" it seems probable, that she consciously took up Whitman's suggestion, in "Democratic Vistas", of making use of colonial raw materials, even local crudities, to forge an appropriate New World literature. In any case, Baughan's protagonist Shingle-Short and his creation, his boat made from local materials, can certainly be read as symbolizing the colonial artist/artisan, striving, in a hostile climate, to produce something from virtually nothing and making do with whatever is on hand.

Baughan's colonial raw materials were local idiom and speech patterns and the rawness of the landscape. She makes use of all three, concentrating in "Shingle-Short" on local idiom and speech (and in "A Bush Section", on the rawness of the landscape, literal and metaphorical). In attempting an indigenous vernacular, Baughan achieves only partial success. One could cavil, for instance, at her inclusion of such non-New Zealand constructions as "as" as a relative pronoun, in, for example, "No good keepin' no mutton warm/For brain an' body *as* don't perform" (p. 16); or at her attaching a prefix "a-" to some verbs : "a-wantin'" (p. 30), "a-heatin'" (p. 16), and so on. One could point too, to her retention of some decidedly "English" expressions: "jolly" (p. 33) ; "I lay!" (p. 22), and "'tis" and "'tain't" throughout. At times, however, she catches something of the vernacular of (un-educated) New Zealanders, for instance in her occasional insertion of a redundant "like": "Tautens her belt, like," (p. 15) and in the local colloquial use of "fair" as an adverb: "Fair makes you want to cut an' quit" (p. 33).

It is in her metaphors and colloquialisms that Baughan best succeeds in relating speech to its location. An indigenous ear can accept without

reservations such expressions as: "couldn't stick it" (p. 14), or "on the booze" (p. 25), or her use of the local name "tute", in preference to the shrub's correct pronunciation, "*tutu*" (p. 14). She makes use of expressions derived from gold-mining: "[things didn't] pan out"(p. 14) and "fossickin'" (p. 34). Shingle-Short refers to himself as a "cowbanger", Australasian slang for dairy farmer, or cow-hand, common in the early twentieth century. She finds a name for her narrator in Australasian slang. "Shingle-Short", she explains in a footnote, is "Australasian for 'a tile loose'" (p. 11). Some other familiar colloquialisms sprinkled throughout the poem are: "by gum!" (p. 16), "I scoots" (p. 14), "buck up!" (p. 22), "lick" (meaning "out-do", p. 19), "poor bloke!", "dog" (meaning to pester, p.20), "Dash'd if . . ." (p. 24), "a drop" (as a euphemism for hard liquor, p. 31), "it's all to pot", "[thoughts] come pat" (p. 20), "All fire it!" (p.25), "No fear!" (p. 26), "feller" (p.25), "rummy" (p.27), "spuds" (p. 12), "you scab", (p.26 ), "larrikins" (p. 27), "Whoppers" (p. 28), "I'll be jigger'd", "cuss'd" (p. 30), "palaver" (p. 40), "the whole caboodle" (p. 33), "clean forgot" (p.34), and "swallow"(meaning accept, p. 17), "nark'd", "dunno" (p. 35), "chuckin'" (p. 39).

As well, local referents, such as "*whare*" "*totara*" "*rimu*", "*tute*" "*maire*", make the setting undeniably New Zealand, and mention of the mynahs (p. 40), suggests specifically, a North Island location. She introduces as well (consistent with "facts in their naked common reality"), "unpoetic" items, such as, "fencin'-wire," (p.16) "kerosene" (p. 14); "cabbages" (p. 29), "paddicks" (p.39), "mucky sand", (28), "stummick" (p. 32) and "Olsen's bran new boiler" (p 27).

One of Baughan's minor innovations , the domestic metaphor, some of which are to be found in her earlier volumes, continues here. For example, "Missis cold as the porridge-plate" (p.13), "Road's like . . . Pea-soup, treacle,

pudd'n an' sich -/Reggular marmalade o' mud" (p. 11), "one half-toothful o' solid sense" (p.17), "No good keepin' no mutton warm/ For brain an' body as don't perform" (p. 16), "An' didn' them ugly moments thread, straight as cotton, to this good hour?" (p. 15), "Little run-away bits o' sky" (p. 39), "Reckon the wet's a-polished the air" (p. 40). The domestic metaphors may be seen as an extension of the elevation of mundane facts as demanded by a transcendentalist perspective.

Baughan's innovation is not limited merely to the introduction of the local and the mundane. She essays, albeit tentatively, an inclusion of the undeniably vulgar. Emerson insisted on "the worth of the vulgar".<sup>8</sup> Whitman complied. (That Baughan was familiar with this aspect of Whitman's work, is suggested by the poetry-reading anecdote, [appendix, p. 256]). In some of her letters, too, she suggests a transcendentalist understanding of the common or lowly as inherently divine.<sup>9</sup> Baughan is capable, in the interest of characterization, of casting aside conventional Edwardian delicacy of image. "Been on the booze inside my brain" is Shingle-Short's colourful paraphrase for his lack of perspicuity. And she certainly parts company with the more refined literary offerings of her peers when she has her cow-hand exclaim, for instance, "Oh stinkin' ! Makes you kind o' heave!" (p. 33), or "O you scab!" (p. 26), or "You bloomin' loony" (p. 24). The reaction of a 1908 reviewer to her choice of *Shingle-Short* as the book's title, points up just how radical a departure Baughan had made from the conventions of Edwardian delicacy, especially of its women writers:

Why do our poetesses do these things? Miss Jessie Mackay once issued a book of dainty verse, bearing the title "The Sitter on the Rail". And now we have Miss Baughan going one better, and issuing a book of good poetry, in the simple belief that a horrific title upon the cover does not matter. It requires courage to buy a book called "Shingle-Short" . . .

(*The Dominion*, Wgt., 16/5/1908, p. 12).

Baughan appears "modern" for her time, also, in her movement towards "open form". By "open form" here, I mean form that does not keep "poetry" and "life" in separate water-tight compartments, but allows one to merge into the other, "to collapse conceptual distinctions" to use C. K. Stead's Phrase ("From Wystan to Carlos", *In the Glass Case*, 1981, p.148). Baughan achieves this to some extent in such deliberately unpolished prose/verse passages as:

Hallo! You there? Good mornin'! Oh,  
 Look here, though, you must have a home:  
 'Case anyone, you know, should come.  
 Here, - this'll do us; come along!

(p. 38)

The mostly rhymed endings in *Shingle-Short* detract from the effect, but in later examples (such as Janet's monologue in "The Paddock"), in which she dispenses with rhyme altogether, she comes closer to "open form" as it is practiced by contemporary poets, such as Ian Wedde (in "Those Others"), Kendrick Smithyman (in "Circus at the Barber's Shop") or Brian Turner (in "Coming Home"), for instance.

Despite its shortcomings, Baughan's title poem has considerable literary-historical significance. Not only does it attempt a relation of language to location, and of transcendental concept to indigenous vernacular, and a new realism in its metaphors, but it hints at an interest further developed in subsequent allegories - the literary manipulation of the idea of perception.

In the introduction to "A Bush Section" (to follow), I will consider Baughan's "illuminative experience" of 1905, for there appears to be a significant liaison between that event and the creation of her colonial boy protagonist, Thor Rayden. I will seek out the transcendentalist ideas implicit

in the "spontaneous rough verses" recording the event, and attempt to trace the insertion of those ideas into the imagery of the allegory. I will also identify the "new" aspects of "A Bush Section", and make connections between life, transcendentalist metaphysics, and literary innovation in the poem.

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## Notes.

<sup>1</sup>"No good poetry is ever written in a manner twenty years old, for to write in such a manner shows conclusively that the writer thinks from books, convention and cliché, and not from life, yet a man feeling the divorce of life and his art may naturally try to resurrect a forgotten mode if he finds in that mode some leaven, or if he thinks he sees in it some element which may unite that art again to its sustenance, life."

(Ezra Pound in "Prolegomena", *The Poetry Review*, II, Feb. 1913, p. 75).

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Fuller was the leading female transcendentalist of the New England group. She took over from Emerson, the editorship of their literary organ, the *Dial*. The quotation is from Tony Tanner's *The Reign of Wonder*, p. 62.

<sup>3</sup>*Religious aspects of Philosophy*, p. 483

<sup>4</sup>Harrold, Charles Frederick, *Carlyle and German Thought: 1819-1834*. London: Archon Books, 1963, p. 106.

<sup>5</sup>See letter to Andersen, 9/8/1908 ((J.C. Andersen Papers, Auckland Institute and Museum Library).

<sup>6</sup>*The Reign of Wonder*, p. 37.

<sup>7</sup>"Akaroa", *Glimpses of New Zealand Scenery*, p. 317.

<sup>8</sup>*The Reign of Wonder*, p 39.

<sup>9</sup>For instance, she writes, "Nothing is too lowly to manifest His Godhead, and bring His Word into expression" (Letter to Hans Andersen, 18/8/1920, Auckland Institute and Library).



## CHAPTER FIVE: "A BUSH SECTION".

- (i) Introduction (p. 112).
- (ii) The Poem as a Personal Allegory (p. 119).
- (iii) The Poem as a Colonial Allegory (p. 123).
- (iv) Literary Spinoffs from Baughan's "New Worldism" (p. 126).
- Endnotes (p. 138).

### (i) Introduction

The most dramatic factor behind Baughan's empathy with the American Transcendentalists is undoubtedly her mystical "illumination" of 1905. I will therefore preface this section with her account of this happening. Baughan's transcendentalist orientation did not begin with her claimed enlightenment at Chorlton, New Zealand. That experience, she tells us, greatly intensified convictions that had been with her "implicitly, as long as [she] could remember". That this was so, is suggested, as we have seen, by the mystical implications of some of her earliest (1898) poems, such as "Death-in-Life" which conveys a transcendentalist dissolution of the ego, and a total merging with creation at large: "Gone is the misty question, "What am I ?"/No part of me but in the sunlight shares/I am become a morsel of blue sky,/A breath among the slowly-sauntering airs . . . ." Thus Baughan may be seen as already moving, in 1898, towards a position of close empathy with certain aspects of transcendentalist writing. Emerson, we noted, claimed a similar dissolving of identity when contemplating nature.

Transcendentalism is shared by no other New Zealand writer of the period. Its significance to this thesis lies in the literary connections Baughan made under its inspiration, and the way transcendentalist beliefs were

translated, in her hands, into literary innovation. The manner of her description of her mystical experience supports the impression offered by some earlier poems, that she had already absorbed ideas attuned to the idealist-oriented transcendentalism of New England, for these are the ideas reflected - albeit unconsciously - in the spontaneous "rough verses" which she wrote immediately afterwards:

Breathed through by the winds, and in league  
     with the stones of the field,  
 From the light of the stars and the sun  
 Unexcluded, unsealed -  
 Out of all elements formed, to all  
     elements kin,  
 Dark with the dye of Humanity's  
     sorrow and sin,  
 Mate of the murderer and murdered,  
     with foul and forlorn  
 One substance, and yet of one  
     being with Being unborn, -  
 Ready roadway to every experience  
     encountering me -  
 In secret united, delighted, with all that I see -<sup>1</sup>

Baughan's "Breathed through by the winds" recalls Emerson's "the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me", quoted above. The Hegel-inspired concept, uniting "one-ness" with the notion of perpetual becoming that underlies some of Whitman's poetry, is paralleled in her lines above, "One Being with Being unborn" (compare with Whitman's "This is not only one man, this is the father of those who shall be fathers in their turn"; "Children of Adam", *Leaves of Grass, Poetry and Prose.*, p. 256). Baughan's "mate of the murderer and murdered" has, one suspects, biographical relevance. It finds an empathetic echo in Whitman's characteristic all-embracing inclusiveness, as, for instance, in his "This is the

meal equally set . . . It is for the wicked just the same as the righteous" ("Song of Myself", *Leaves of Grass, Poetry and Prose*, p. 205).

Her phrase, "with foul and forlorn - one substance" recalls the Hegelian insistence that evil or imperfection is a necessary and inseparable part of creative evolution. The eternal meliorism inherent in Hegelian dialectic could have been comforting to Baughan's personal situation, for it offers a palatable solution to an acceptance of undesirable facts, such as skeletons in the family cupboard. The motif of fresh life arising from the rot of past error is a recurring one in transcendentalist writing. Typical is Whitman's "From the huge festering trunk . . . Health to emerge and joy, joy universal" ("Song of the Universal", *Poetry and Prose*, p.369). Baughan's "With foul and forlorn - one substance" above, and her emergence nevertheless as "United/delighted" with life, express a similar idea.

In retrospect, Baughan's transcendental experience, which left her feeling "one with everything and everybody", makes her apparent affinity for Whitman, Emerson and Carlyle seems almost inevitable. She had joined the club, as it were - for the American Transcendentalists and Carlyle (and behind them, Plato and Plotinus) all acknowledged, either implicitly or directly, as influencing her outlook, had claimed visionary experiences.

\* \* \* \* \*

Baughan's most significant creation, in its implication for an emergent colonial literature, is her character Thor Rayden, nee Thorold von Reden. Thor is addressed variously as "Changer", "Bright Promise" and "Morn of Man," clearly suggesting his symbolic function as a new antipodean Adam given a fresh start on a colonial scrub farm. Perhaps the first question to ask is

why does Baughan give her persona/protagonist and *antipodean* symbol of a new start, a Germanic surname -"von Reden"? This, I suggest, is a salute to German Idealism. For similar reasons Carlyle used a German persona, "Teufelsdröckh" to harangue his morally flaccid British audience. I stated that in "Shingle-Short" Baughan presented an antipodean version of the child-like, unlearned seer type much lauded in transcendentalist literature. In her character Thor Rayden she does likewise. As a child figure, one who is described as "ignorant", yet with an inborn capacity to "wonder", he is able to represent the transcendentalist emphasis on a naive, child-like, untutored vision as the direct route to a perception of the Divine. As Tony Tanner puts it: "For the Transcendentalists the central question was: how should a man look at the world to recover and regain a sense of its 'actual glory'? And for many of them the answer was - behold it with wonder, like a child" (*The Reign of Wonder*, p. 22).

At several points in the poem one is particularly conscious of the Hegel - Carlyle - Whitman provenance behind the lines.<sup>2</sup> As in the previous poem, I will consider, first, salient concepts of idealist-based transcendentalism, and examine how Baughan embodies them in her New World protagonist, here, the ten-year-old "Thor Rayden". The main underpinning ideas to be looked for are change, relevance, and the subjectivity of interpretation. Later I will consider the contribution of these emphases to the "modern" elements in the poem. I will deal first with the idea of *change* in relation to her persona protagonist, Thor Rayden.

Through her character Thor Rayden, Baughan presents a new colonial archetype. His mission here is not to make of his new land "some corner of a foreign field that is forever England", but to be a changer. Her message is not repetition but evolution, to something new, something better (p. 87) :

What change, O Changer! creature, Creator, of  
 Spirit!  
 . . . wilt thou command  
 and create?

Throughout the poem key words are repeated through a range of parts of speech: "change"/"changeful"/"Changer"/"changing"/"changed", and "create"/"Creator"/"created", and set in opposition to patterned repetitions of words connoting stagnation and entrenched conservatism: "arrested", "stayed", "block", "remain", and so on. The river parallels the situation of Thor himself: it must find a way to move forward despite that which would block its progress:

Running in, running out, running over and under  
 The logs that bridge it, the logs that block it,  
 The logs that helplessly trail in its waters,  
 The jamm'd-up jetsam, the rooted snags

(p. 81).

We are reminded that for Baughan change is yoked to progress. Thor is addressed as "Changer"; he is change personified. He represents the underlying Hegelian first principle. He is also "Creator", and can therefore be read as symbolizing, as well, literary/artistic innovation.

Allied to the concept of change is the idea of *freedom*. We saw that Whitman found in Hegel's idealism "an essential and crowning justification of New World democracy". Because Hegel's dialectical process makes change the fundamental principle of life, "the deepest law of politics is . . . freedom - an open avenue to change" ("Hegel", p. 324). Baughan makes a longing for freedom inherent in her protagonist. The "Strictly tether'd and tied" child Thor indulges in a wistful yearning for the marvellous fluidity of the cloud

"hills" in the sky, that with their "ridges uprooted" can "Break, wander and flee" (p. 84).

Baughan's colonial boy may be seen also as a symbol of *relevance*. In severing Thor from his aristocratic line, and re-constituting him as commoner and potential democrat, Baughan cuts him down to fit his colonial cloth. The Transcendentalists' emphasis on relevance had an obvious bearing on American colonial literature and a flow-on effect in the newer colonies. Emerson made a dramatic stand for relevance, not, initially, in relation to literature, but to forms of worship. In reference to his resignation from the Unitarian ministry in 1832, he wrote, "I am not engaged to Christianity by decent Forms" - and he added later, "Its institutions should be as flexible as the wants of man. That form from which the life and suitableness have departed should be as worthless in its eyes as the dead leaves that are falling around us" (*Works*, vol. 11, p. 21).

The child Thor communes with the natural objects around him. To the transcendentalist, the location of "*here*" is in the eye of the beholder, "here or nowhere", to quote Carlyle via Teufelsdröckh. The starting-point of Thor's perspective is his *present* location. Thor Rayden is "*Here*, dawning, *here* sent/To *this* disconsolate kingdom" (p. 86, my emphasis). A little later Baughan re-emphasizes the *local* arena of Thor's field of duty: he is "*Here*, to *this* rough and raw prospect, *these* back-blocks of Being, assign'd" (p. 87, my emphases). Her concern for the relevance of the here and now and (in the poem's literary interpretation), for the currently *viable*, is symbolized in Thor's choice of "treasures", namely, everything that *lives*. The child is said to be "Conning, counting, and clasping as treasures" whatever "Moves and changes and lives" (p. 85).

Another transcendentalist value absorbed into Baughan's protagonist is the capacity to "*wonder*". Thor Rayden ponders the night sky. He is said to be "wondering" - a word of great consequence in a transcendentalist context. Carlyle made much of the word. He frequently extolled "wonder" as "the basis of worship" and defended it against the sterile Utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham and John Mill. His extraordinary professor Teufelsdröckh protests vigorously on behalf of wonder:

The man who cannot wonder, who does not habitually wonder (and worship) were he the President of innumerable Royal Societies, and carried the whole *Mechanique Celeste* and *Hegel's Philosophy*, and the epitome of all Laboratories and Observatories with their results, in his single head, - is but a Pair of Spectacles behind which there is no Eye.

(*Sartor*, op. cit., p. 51)

Characteristic transcendentalist motifs of amelioration imply a *justification of evil* when viewed from a long-sighted, holistic perspective. We may recall Shingle-Short's, "An' didn' them ugly moments thread, Straight as cotton, to this good hour?" In "A Bush Section", the fire which destroyed the bush has purgatorial implications. The opening vista conveyed a bleak landscape of blackened stumps and ash. Yet these very ashes are later said to be "soil-sweetening" - effecting a Hegel-like justification of evil. A typical metaphor illustrating this tenet presents Thor's situation as "From the battle-field bones of a ruin'd epoch,/Life the Unruin'd freshly upspringing".

Baughan reminds us that for the Hegel-biased transcendentalist, "*struggle is the law of growth*". Like "Shingle-Short", whose mission was to "heave and haul things different", Thor Rayden must make a strenuous effort to achieve, "to thews and to sinews, Achievement!" (p. 87). Baughan uses the word "battle" in reference to Thor's struggle to make productive the bleak

prospect before him. But it is more than a battle to tame the land: implications of his transcendental destiny imbue the word with connotations of a Holy War. The Protestant work ethic/Hegelian struggle ethic entrenched in Baughan's philosophy makes the fire-ravaged bush section Thor's means of salvation: it is the site of his trial by hard work. In the poem's implied literary message, his "burden'd allotment" may be read as the unaccommodating literary climate to be borne by the would-be innovator.

In retrospect, we can see how closely Thor Rayden symbolizes his underpinning philosophy. Eight elements are essential to the idealist-based transcendentalism flavouring the poem: an innocent child-like vision; a subjective viewpoint; a heightened awareness of on-going change; a sense of transcendental destiny; a striving for freedom; an elevation of the ordinary; a justification of evil via a holistic overview; and a capacity to "wonder". All eight are inherent in the child Thor.

### **(ii) The Poem as a Personal Allegory.**

Commenting on the concealed autobiographical element in *Sartor Resartus*, M. H. Holcroft says, "although [in New Zealand writing] no Carlyle has thrown his metaphysical web around an antipodean Teufelsdröckh, we have our share of concealed autobiography".<sup>3</sup> Baughan is certainly no Carlyle, but Holcroft's comment, in fact, neatly sums up what she *does* do with Thor Rayden, her "antipodean Teufelsdröckh" in "A Bush Section".

Not only does Thor Rayden symbolize basic transcendentalist concepts, he appears to represent as well Baughan's specific mystical enlightenment at Chorlton, just as Carlyle's Teufelsdröckh (in the *Rue Saint-Thomas de l'Enfer* in Paris) re-enacts his creator's mystical enlightenment in Leith Walk,



Edinburgh. In this section I will examine the apparent liaison between her character Thor Rayden and her "rough verses", mentioned above. The object will be to present Thor as springing directly from that event, thus making more explicit my claim of the essential link between the biographical Baughan, her transcendentalism, and the "new" aspects of her work. Baughan's Thor, we remember, is Change personified.

Baughan seems, by vicarious substitution, to attribute her new-found perception to her archetypical colonial/persona, Thor Rayden. Certainly, there is considerable circumstantial evidence to suggest that the character evolved directly from that experience. It will be convenient, for ease of reference, to reprint part of this "poem". The relevant lines are:

Breathed through by the winds, and in league  
     with the stones of the field,  
 From the light of the stars and the sun  
 Unexcluded, unsealed -  
 Out of all elements formed, to all  
     elements kin,  
 Dark with the dye of Humanity's  
     sorrow and sin,  
 Mate of the murderer and murdered,  
     with foul and forlorn  
 One substance, and yet of one  
     being with Being unborn, -  
 Ready roadway to every experience  
     encountering me -  
 In secret united, delighted, with all that I see -

In the first place there is a similarity of expression between the phrases of the "rough poem" and some of those in "A Bush Section" describing Thor Rayden. For instance, in the verse above, Baughan records her impression of being "Out of all elements formed": Thor is "Offspring of elements all" (p. 86). Baughan emphasizes her own heightened awareness of one-ness with on-going creation in the lines (above), "of one being/with Being unborn": Thor

too is made consciously inseparable from evolutionary processes in the phrases, "Life, re-creator of life!" (p. 86), and "Begotten, begettor of changes" (p. 86). Baughan (in the "rough verses"), felt herself to be a "Ready roadway to every experience": her protagonist in the allegory is addressed as "thou highway forward and back" (p. 87). She had a strong impression of immersion in the total human condition, "With foul and forlorn/One substance", and this too is the implication of Thor's situation as "son of a drunkard" (p. 80). It is a reasonable assumption that in the character Thor, Baughan symbolizes her new-found transcendentalist perception.

\* \* \* \* \*

Typically, in Baughan's allegories, individuals become archetypes and personal experiences are sublimated and broadened to their national and even cosmic implications. With the American Transcendentalists, prestige "gravitated towards the experiencing ego, the seeing *individual* eye" (my emphasis).<sup>4</sup> It is with the transcendentalist writers that the first-person singular achieved pre-eminence as a literary device. Emerson predicted that novels would be replaced by diaries and autobiographies. Thoreau begins *Walden* with the explanation that he will retain the "I, or first person" as there is nobody else he knows so well. Whitman in "Song of Myself" takes the subjective capacity to identify with various moods and situations of the broad American spectrum to the ultimate degree. He not only sees, he *becomes* what he sees:

Agonies are one of my changes of garments  
I do not ask the wounded person how he feels, I myself  
become the wounded person,  
my hurts turn livid upon me as I lean on a cane and  
observe.

(Poetry and Prose, p. 225.)

Baughan, we remember, had expressed this idea - of *becoming* the observed object - as early as 1898: "I am *become* a morsel of blue sky . . ." (my emphasis). In "A Bush Section", she looks inward to express the inevitable deprivations of the colonial situation. Her persona has "the Burnt Bush *within and without*" him (p. 88, my emphasis). Probably discretion persuaded her to hint at biographical allusions via a disembodied rhetorical voice.

It is perhaps not merely incidental that Thor is ten years old when he contemplates the scene of devastation before him. Ten is the age at which Blanche Baughan was brought face to face with devastating family tragedy. Her own shattered childhood gives poignancy to the line "A birth-right that fires have been through" (p. 87). Her own experience of discovering a reflection of her interior psychological damage in a scene described as "lean, cumber'd with ruin, lonely, bristling with hardship" (p. 87) is effectively compressed in the phrase "burden'd allotment" and in the description of Thor as having "the Burnt Bush within and without" him. Like her protagonist, Baughan came to New Zealand, at least in part, to escape a family scandal. Like him, she was the youngest, and eventually the last, of her family. Tainted blue blood had made a new start desirable for Thor Rayden. Tainted blood in the literal (medical) sense had caused Baughan to opt for the single state and deliberate severance of the family line. Like her protagonist too, she considered herself "twice-orphan'd" - orphaned both of parents and of Father/Motherland.

I have noted Baughan's apparent familiarity with *Leaves of Grass*. She could hardly have failed to absorb Whitman's subjectivism, since it permeates the work. In "Song of Myself", the suffering of his countrymen is expressed via his experiencing persona: "I am the hounded slave, I wince at the bite of

dogs" (*Poetry and Prose*, p. 225). Whitman fuses the biographical self with his persona: "Starting from fish-shape Paumanok where I was born", and moves from the specific, geographically located persona to chant the wide all-inclusive vista of his country - and wider yet to the cosmic implications of his observations : "Was somebody asking to see the soul?/See, your own shape and countenance, persons . . . the rocks and sands" ("Starting from Paumanok", *Poetry and Prose*, p. 183). A parallel progression, though much abbreviated, is found in Baughan's "A. Bush Section". In Thor Rayden, Baughan creates a persona springing from a biographical base but expandable to god-sized dimensions (as "Tool yet Employer/Of Forces Almighty") and applies her creation to the colonial situation. As such, he appears to inherit directly from Whitman's narrator of "Song of Myself" who explains himself as "Magnifying and applying come I, . . . Taking myself the exact dimensions of Jehovah" (*Poetry and Prose*, p. 233) and who identifies, to the point of fusion, with growth and growing-pains of his country:

I am become any presence or truth of humanity here,  
And see myself in prison shaped like another man,  
And feel the dull unintermitted pain [sic].

(*Poetry and Prose*, p. 70)

### (iii) The Poem as a Colonial Allegory.

Baughan's Protestant work ethic/Hegelian struggle ethic easily accommodates a Carlyle-like insistence that would-be leaders must earn their leadership. Despite his high-born ancestry, Thorold von Reden, "last of a long line of nobles", is obliged to earn his keep helping with menial chores on a backblocks farm. Baughan has stripped him of all privilege. With his bare hands, and by his own effort, he must make what he will of life. Baughan parts company with the prevailing New Zealand ethos, for here is no



and create?

(p. 87)

In "A Bush Section" Baughan appears to attempt to do for New Zealand poetry what Walt Whitman had demanded for American literature in his essay "Democratic Vistas". Whitman's call is for a new poetic "consistent with the Hegelian formulas". Hegel, he called "humanity's chiefest teacher".<sup>6</sup> We can not be certain of how "consistent" Whitman's interpretation of the much-lauded formulas was. In "Carlyle from American Points of View" (*Poetry and Prose*, p. 897), he admits to "recounting Hegel a little freely". And it is a reasonable assumption that what Baughan gives us is simply her version of Hegelian ideas or her version of Whitman's understanding of them. No matter - I am concerned with the *literary use* she made of idealist-derived notions, *as she read them*, not with the niceties of a purist interpretation of the originals. She could hardly have missed Whitman's enthusiasm. In "Democratic Vistas" he writes, "What I believe is called Idealism seems to me to suggest . . . the course of enquiry and desert of favour for our New World metaphysics, their foundation of and in literature, giving hue to all" (p.76). The character Thor Rayden embodies the essential facets of the New Worldism promoted by Whitman in that essay. In keeping with his Hegelian provenance, Baughan's Thor Reyden is "Tool yet Employer/Of Forces Almighty" Hegel named those who inaugurated change, "an instrument of the Absolute" (Durant, "Hegel", p. 323).

Inseparable from "New Worldism", as advocated by Whitman, is the promotion of democracy. On this aspect Baughan's Thor Rayden stays true to his New World inheritance, but diverges from his Carlylean line. Despite her admiration for Carlyle, and her Carlyle-like emphasis on spiritual rebirth, there is a fundamental difference between what her master had seen as a

panacea for a morally corrupt Britain and what she implicitly proposes for the colony.<sup>7</sup> Carlyle, of course, was no democrat. To him, the right relationship of the followers to their hero figure was a discipular one. Baughan advocates democracy. Thor Rayden, nee Thorold von Reden, is Germanic-derived transcendentalism cut to fit the colonial condition.

Baughan's tailoring of her protagonist to antipodean dimensions may be observed, for instance, in Thor's devolution from aristocrat Thorold von Reden to poor commoner, Thor Rayden. She packs much significance into Thorold's change of name. The noble-sounding Thorold is shortened to a more egalitarian form, Thor, acquiring in the process connotations of God-in-Man. In keeping with his straitened circumstances, the "von" with its aristocratic implications, has been erased, and the once-proud family name finally levelled to the common height by a "near enough" phonetic spelling.<sup>8</sup> The name change implies a pressure from within and without to conform, in a land where Jack is now as good as his master.

#### **(iv) Literary Spinoffs from Baughan's "New Worldism".**

My definition of "New Worldism", as explained chapter two, applies here. In this section I will look at her innovations at a textual level - the literary spin-offs from her transcendentalist New World perspective - and examine how that perspective points her in the direction of "modernism".

Again Baughan seems to be attempting a local equivalent of Emerson's "plain American facts" or of Royce's facts "in their naked commonplace reality". Baughan's choice of vocabulary is rare for its time and place, in a seriously-intended poem. In "Shingle-Short" we noted Baughan's inclusion of words like "booze" and "bloke" and "spuds". In "A Bush Section" she

mentions, for instance, "cow-bails", "mud", "backblocks", "viaduct", "macrocarpa", "freight", "cabbage", "stumps", "landslip", and so on. (In her prose as well, we may note her empathy with this transcendentalist insistence of the Divine in the ordinary and "poetry" in down-to-earth referents).<sup>9</sup>

Not only did transcendentalist concepts help promote the elevation of the ordinary and a localizing of language; for some, at least, it opened up a whole new interest in perception. It is known that Baughan read German and that she lists some of Kant's titles and occasionally quotes a Kantian maxim. There is no proof that she picked up her interest in perception directly from Kant - but she could hardly have avoided the subject, considering her interest in philosophy. Kant's "Transcendental Idealism" has been defined as:

A term applied by Kant to his theory of the external world. It refers to his view that the objects of our experience . . . have no independent existence outside our thoughts. The adjective "transcendental" indicates Kant's reason for this view; namely, that only by accepting it can we account for our *a priori* knowledge.

(*A Dictionary of Philosophy*, p.149)

It is apparent from some of her letters that Baughan took the idea seriously, and that she retained a consciousness of the difference between appearance and unknowable "reality". As late as 1936, in a letter to Ursula Bethell, we find comments consistent with the given definition of transcendental idealism:

My dear Abbe,

The last day of the old year & someday there will come also the last day of our earth-years - yet, what real significance, what reality has, either day? Both are only denoted by our limited human intelligence! . . . And our death out of the body & and out of our poor little brains & tiny little experiences will be just as lacking in reality!. . . When the creek meets the sea, the fret and Why? of the banks just has no existence . . .<sup>10</sup>



She had a precedent in Whitman, who was intrigued with the notion of the extraordinary difference to interpretation afforded by a transcendental perspective:

To the cry now victorious - the cry of sense, science, flesh . . . solid perpetuities . . . fear not, my brethren, my sisters, to sound out with equally determin'd voice that conviction - illusions! apparitions! figments all! . . . migrate in soul to . . . superior and spiritual points of view, and, palpable as it seems under present relations, it all and several might, nay certainly would, fall apart and vanish.

("Democratic Vistas", *Poetry and Prose*, pp. 985-6)

Once again we find an idea springing apparently from her New World orientation leading her in the direction of Modernism. In a limited way, Baughan's interest in the idea of perception in these works creates a precedent for a later and infinitely more skilled practitioner of illusion and disillusion, Janet Frame. In her novel *Living in the Maniototo*, for instance, Frame creates a believable reality, and suddenly, without warning (though clues are planted), pulls the rug from beneath her readers' reasonable assumptions. And this is what Baughan appears to attempt in "A Bush Section" wherein a switch mid-way to a different point of view completely reverses the mood of the poem. What the beholder sees, *is*. Baughan's interest in the subjectivity of interpretation surfaces in the allegories in her attempts to defamiliarize the familiar. Her method is the disruption and reversal of expectation.

A cursory reading of the opening verse paragraphs of "A Bush Section" may give the impression of a transparently "realistic" depiction of a New Zealand scene. There is a "modern" feel in the poem's frank admission of ugliness and hardship in a far-from-paradisiacal South Seas island, and in its

discordant music. The opening lines do indeed give an impression of what P.C.M. Alcock calls a "confrontation of actuality":<sup>11</sup>

Logs, at the door, by the fence; logs, broadcast  
           over the paddock;  
 Sprawling in motionless thousands away down the  
           green of the gully,  
           Logs, grey-black.

(p. 79)

Thus far only. In the very next line - "And the opposite rampart of ridges/Bristles against the sky" - we are jolted by the phrase "rampart of ridges" back from realistic appraisal to literary imagery. In the second section, despite its local colour, the word "forlorn" in the last line imparts an ambience of English Romantic poetry. Throughout the poem, in fact, Baughan takes a pointedly unromantic "prop" and makes it strange and unfamiliar by setting it in the stylized unrealism of the Romantic Sublime. The poem opens to a sublime vision inspiring awe and dismay at the destructive forces of the elements against which humanity appears to hold but an insecure tenure, almost literally in this case, for the "little raw farm" is "on the edge of the desolate hillside/Perch'd on the brink" (p.80). Here, as in landscape painting in the sublime genre, the human figure and (man-made) structures are made to appear very small and vulnerable in a vast expanse. Baughan continually alters perspective to achieve this effect:

All is mute, monotonous, stark;  
 In the whole wide sweep round the low little hut  
           of the settler  
 No life to be seen; nothing stirs . . . .

(p.80)

In the opening scene Baughan subverts expectations of a Pacific paradise by suffusing the colonial vista with connotations of a battle-field: ostensibly it

is merely logs that are "sprawling in motionless thousands", and only the landscape that is stuck and spiked with splintered remnants of the forest, but the surrounding hillsides form a "rampart" of ridges, thus inviting the reading of "logs" as fallen soldiers "stuck" as in "stuck pig", and "spiked" as in bayoneted dead men. The landscape is described as both "mute" and "tumultuous", evoking disturbing suggestions of a suppressed scream. A little later she uses the word "battle" for Thor's projected struggle to tame the land (p. 86) and writes of the "wounds" of the land. Baughan frequently chooses images that subvert her subject's expected characteristics: for instance, she divests "mist" of its misty qualities by relating it to the verb "tangled", thereby attributing to it briar-like clasping qualities, in:

. . . the Star-logs silently  
lie  
Dimm'd as it were by the distance, or maybe in mists  
of the mountain  
Tangled -

(p.84).

Similarly, in contrast to the rigidity of Earth-bound hills are their cloud-formed equivalents, invested, in the imagination of the "strictly tethered and tied" child Thor, with marvellous mobility:

But see! these hills of the sky  
They waver and move, their gullies are drifting, and  
driving;  
Their ridges, uprooted,  
Break, wander and flee, they escape!

(p.84)

Subjective melancholia generates a subversion of expected attributes, seeing the burnt-out landscape as "a dead disconsolate/ocean/Of billows arrested, of currents stay'd" (p. 80). Baughan evades expectations, too, as she

homes in on the small figure standing in his "realistic" setting of settler's hut and cabbage-patch and realism of domestic trivia - "the kindling all split" and "the dishes all washed after supper" - and reveals the farm-boy completing his daily chores to be not the expected working-class lad but in fact "the last of a long line of nobles" (p. 80). And she immediately punctures the commonly-assumed *kudos* of such a background by making him "son of a Drunkard".

Baughan demonstrates a Janet-Frame like capacity to build up an impression that appears to combust spontaneously, as it were, without warning. First, using all the apparatus of the Romantic Sublime, she makes major tragedy of the sensible and indeed essential business (from the settlers' point of view) of clearing the bush for farming. By using words consistent with the sublime genre - words connoting chaos ("sprawling", "tumultuous", "Strewn"); fear ("fire", "skeleton", "dead"); and phrases suggesting a vast unpeopled landscape ("logs . . . sprawling in motionless thousands away down the/green of the gully"); human insecurity ("perch'd on the brink, over-looking the desolate valley"); and unnatural phenomena ("billows arrested", "currents stay'd"), she builds an atmosphere of awe and impending doom. A little later in the poem, this deliberately constructed atmosphere of insidious threat is summarily dispelled, with, as it were, a casual wave of the hand, with the phrase "Green Bush to the Moa, Burnt Bush to the resolute settler!" What seemed to be a requiem for the departed bush is seen for what it is, virtually a *parody* of the all-too-familiar colonial poetical hand-wringings over the departure of the native rain forest. That at least is one of its meanings.

Another is the subjectivity of perception, demonstrated here by the switch in mid-poem to a different perspective. We are reminded of Whitman: ". . . migrate in soul . . . to spiritual and superior points of view, and, palpable as it seems under present relations, it all and several might, nay certainly would,

fall apart and vanish." And in Baughan's poem the change in perception at this point results from just such a migration to "a spiritual and superior" point of view. The change of focus has radically transformed the interpretation of the colonial scene. The exclamation "Green Bush to the Moa, Burnt Bush to the resolute settler!" compresses the essence of Hegelian philosophy, "the true is the whole": the despoliation of the great rain forests is seen now, with holistic perception, not as a tragedy, but as the spring-board for a new surge of growth and development, albeit in another form. The Moa in this context may be read as symbolizing those unchanging, peaceful stretches in history when little development takes place. According to Hegel, "The history of the world is not the theatre of happiness; periods of happiness are blank pages in it, for they are periods of harmony" (Durant, "Hegel", p. 323); hence the juxtaposition of struggle and creative achievement in Baughan's allegories.

Baughan's subversion technique applies to text as well as context. Her various "roughening" devices, too, evade expectations of Edwardian poetics. Whitman, we may recall, had demanded in his "New Worldism" an embodiment of "the rude rank spirit of the democracies". Again Baughan obliges. The "rough and raw prospect" of the colonial scene described in the poem is indeed its author's over-riding impression of the colony, as may be gauged by a reference in her essay "Akaroa" to the local architecture:

Most New Zealand towns at present make one thankful that the timber of which they are chiefly built is a perishable substance, which in the course of thirty years or so will give us the chance to try again.<sup>12</sup>

In an article in *The Christchurch Press* Baughan puts heavy emphasis on the inchoate state of the nation: "We are still raw, unripe; our history is still, we



sprinkling of sombre adjectives - "desolate", "disconsolate", "raw", "silent", "skeleton [world]", "departed", "unmade", "dead", "ruin'd", "forlorn", "blank", "monotonous", "stark" - infuse the scene with melancholy. The rawness of the scene is complemented visually by the untidy, irregular appearance of the lines on the page, sufficiently unkempt to create an illusion of unpremeditated composition.

Baughan seems aware of the innovative capacity of older forms when applied to a new context. In fact she reaches right back to early and middle English oral poetry for inspiration for "new" aural effects radically different from the smoothly-polished, rhymed verse still in vogue:

In a somer seson, // whan soft was the sonne,  
I shope me in shroudes, // as I a shepe were,  
In habits of heremite, // unholy of werkes,  
Went wyde in his world, // wonders to here.<sup>15</sup>

The four strong stresses divided by a medial caesura and reinforced by alliteration as in the opening passage of *Piers Plowman* above, are resurrected in "A Bush Section" in such lines as, "Conning, counting, and clasping as treasures (p. 85); "Rolling, unrolling, tempestuously tossing" (p. 82); "casting careless behind them/Their burdens of brightness" (p. 84). Baughan's message of constant change is complemented by the ever-changing rhythms in the poem. She frequently varies the stress, thereby achieving effects anticipating what Gerard Manley Hopkins called his "sprung rhythm" more than a decade before Robert Bridges brought them to light in 1918. In his variant of strong stressed metre each foot begins with a stressed syllable, which may stand alone or may connect with a number, usually from one to three, light syllables. The two vital characteristics of Hopkins' sprung rhythm - the great weight of strong stresses and the frequent juxtaposition of strong stresses at any point in a line - are found throughout Baughan's allegories (most notably in "Burnt

Bush"), but here, for instance, in "long, prone, grey-black logs" (p. 79); "Gold! gold on the gloom!" (p. 82); "deep in the clear dark distance" (p. 82); "against Ruin here hardily pitted" (p.88); or "Little, feeble, ignorant, destitute" (p. 86).

Although the variety and nature of Baughan's textual innovations suggest an attempt to relate the poem to its time and place, the reader is constantly reminded of her position as a literary bridge between the old and the new. She does indeed assay, at least intermittently, a new "angularity"- a word used by several of her reviewers - but the "realistic" impression imparted by Baughan's mundane referents is constantly undermined by her retention as well of "poetic" vocabulary and archaisms. In the following passage, "yonder", "o'er", "so glitter" and "yon rocky-ledged hill" conflict with the local colour of "over the bails", "the start of the milking" and the down-to-earth "viaduct":

For the curv'd Three (that yonder  
So glitter and sparkle  
There, over the bails),  
This morning at dawn,  
At the start of the milking,  
Stood pale on the brink of yon rocky-ledged hill;  
And the Cross, o'er the viaduct  
Now, . . .

(p. 84)

Baughan does not let us forget the transcendentalist significance of her protagonist's situation. Thor Rayden does not simply find himself, through family circumstances, in a wild antipodean landscape: he is serving his transcendental destiny. He is "here *sent* " (p. 86). He is "to this rough and raw prospect *assign'd*" (p. 87, my emphases). This emphasis, too, is attuned to Whitman's "New Worldism". He advocated "a sublime and serious Religious Democracy" ("Democratic Vistas", *Poetry and Prose*, p.977). With



the introduction of the religious theme Baughan gears up to an elevated epic style, positing the speaker's questions in the second person singular, reverting to archaic language, biblical cadences and echoes, inversion, fervent exclamations, and expansively phrased rhetorical questions:

Yea, morn of Man,  
 Creature design'd to create:  
 Offspring of elements all, appointed their captain and  
 ruler:  
 Here dawning, here sent  
 To this thy disconsolate kingdom -  
 What change, O Changer! wilt thou devise and decree?

(p. 86)

This, of course, contradicts and conflicts with her apparent aim to make use of the local and the ordinary, and it supports my earlier comment, that she is better at suggesting what needs to be done, than at (consistently) doing it. But the example of Whitman may have lead her astray here, for despite his emphasis on "the modern" (in "Democratic Vistas"), in some of his poems, such as "A Song of Joys", he reverts to a similar ecstatic high style and to the second person singular : "Yet O my soul supreme! /Knows't thou the joys of pensive thought? . . . joys worthy thee O soul . . . " (*Poetry and Prose*, p. 329).

Baughan's "A Bush Section" may be read as essentially a transcendentalist interpretation of the colonial situation, one which includes always a long-sighted cosmic eye on the eternal ebb and flow of nature as well as concern for the local and immediate implications.<sup>16</sup> What is the place, and what is the significance of "A Bush Section" in New Zealand literature? Thor Rayden symbolizes change, and the need to change. His situation (like Shingle-Short's boat), is metaphorically the *status quo* of the country's barely emergent indigenous literature, cut off from its English heritage. Baughan stresses the difficulties and deprivations of Thor Rayden's situation: he is

standing on "Poverty's Threshold"; his prospect is "bristling with hardship". There is much yet to be done. I suggest his place in New Zealand's literary history is exactly where Baughan leaves him - standing on the threshold.

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## Notes.

<sup>1</sup>*Recorded Illuminates*, op. cit., p. 105.

<sup>2</sup>Her vision of "Life, the Unruin'd, freshly upspringing" arising from "the battle-field bones of a ruin'd epoch" displays a Hegel-like meliorism. It recalls as well Carlyle's vision - via Teufelsdröckh - when surveying a European battle-field:

. . . all that gore and carnage will be shrouded-in, absorbed into manure; and the next year the Marchfield will be green, nay greener. Thrifty, unwearied nature. . . how dost thou, from the very carcass of the killer, bring Life for the Living (*Sartor*, p. 132.)

Whitman. In "Song of the universal" (which, incidentally, Baughan mentions in a margin note), writes:

Forth from their masks, no matter what,  
From the huge festering trunk, from craft and  
guile and tears,  
Health to emerge and joy, joy universal.

(*Poetry and Prose*, p. 369).

<sup>3</sup>"Before the Earthquake", *The Deepening Stream* Christchurch: Caxton, 1946, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>5</sup>Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present* New York : New York University Press 1965, p. 181.

<sup>6</sup>The quotation is from "Metaphysics" in *The Evolution of Walt Whitman*, op. cit., p. 58.

<sup>7</sup>In "Carlyle from American Points of View", Whitman, by offsetting Carlyle with Hegel, counterpoises Carlyle's theory of *noblesse oblige* with "the tenets of the evolutionists" ("Specimen Days", *Poetry and Prose* pp. 890-99).

<sup>8</sup>Baughan makes a similar point in her sketch "*Cafe au Lait*" in which the Swiss French immigrant Monsieur Metraillieur is called "Mr Meat-railer" by his colonial customers (*Brown Bread in a Colonial Oven*), p. 83.

<sup>9</sup>A passage from Baughan's prose, will illustrate how closely attuned Baughan was to this aspect of the transcendentalist way of seeing. In her essay "Summit Road" Baughan writes:

Some people are squeamish about man's interference with Nature; and some of her pictorial effects he may, he does undoubtedly, spoil; but her poetical, her universal aspect - that, how enormously he enhances! The presence of the Cape-to-Cairo railway bridge, for instance, amid the very spray of the Victoria Falls, takes nothing away from Nature's impressiveness, but emphasizes it instead . . . .

(*Glimpses of New Zealand Scenery*, p. 208)

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- <sup>10</sup>Letter to Ursula Bethell (Abbe), 31/12/1936, Archives, University of Canterbury.
- <sup>11</sup>"A True Colonial Voice: Blanche Edith Baughan", *Landfall* CCII [June 1972], p. 163.
- <sup>12</sup>B. E. Baughan in "Akaroa", *Glimpses of New Zealand Scenery* (Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin and Wellington, N.Z.; Melbourne and London: Whitcombe and Tombs [1922] ), p. 300.
- <sup>13</sup>"Akaroa", 13/1/1917, p.7.
- <sup>14</sup>J.C. Reid in G. A. Wilkes and J. C. Reid, *The Literatures of Australia and New Zealand* Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1970, p. 169.
- <sup>15</sup>B Prologue, *The Vision of William Concerning Piers the Ploughman*, Walter Skeat ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, M DCCC LXXXVI), p. 2.
- <sup>16</sup>In this she is aligned with Whitman's New-Worldism. "America", he declares, " demands a poetry that is bold, modern . . . all-surrounding and Kosmical"[sic.] ("Democratic Vistas", *Poetry and Prose*, p. 69).

## CHAPTER SIX: "MAUI'S FISH".

(i) Introduction (p. 140).

(ii) Making Changes:

(a) Debunking Anglophilia (p. 142).

(b) A New Way of Seeing (p. 150).

(c) Literary Spinoffs: Toward a New Poetic (p. 153).

Endnotes (p. 164).

### (i) Introduction.

"Maui's Fish" is Baughan's only attempt at a translation into English of a Maori myth. But "translation" is perhaps misleading. Baughan is as much concerned with *using* the legend as telling it.<sup>1</sup> Baughan reconstrues the tale as a parable of change for the colony. As in "Shingle-Short", the poem's central symbol (here, the new land fished from the sea), serves both her literary and her transcendentalist agenda. Here, as in the allegories considered earlier, the message, which invites both a socio-political and a literary reading, is the need for a fresh start in a new land unfettered by inherited injustices - or the restrictions of inherited literatures - of older regimes. Maui's brand new world is the perfect metaphor for Baughan's own description of the effect on her of her gaining of visionary perception: "it is to gain a new world because a new view of the world". It can equally be read also as a symbol for the proposed new poetic - for Baughan implies that a new literature must undergo a *localizing* process, a "making over" of inherited forms: "Dip in deep dew of thy seas what swims yet of their catch, and *renew it*" (my emphasis). The fetching up of the great fish from local waters may be seen as symbolizing this essential baptism. Baughan's continuing emphasis on the importance of the "localizing" process contributes to her comparative "modernism".<sup>2</sup>

Baughan finds in the protagonist, Maui, a vigorous go-getter who achieves great things by determination and daring, virtually a ready-made representative of her ideal (and idealist) colonial. As in the previous poems, the protagonist exemplifies a basic Hegelian maxim, "struggle is the law of growth". "Shingle-Short", we remember, aimed to "heave an' haul things different" : Thor Rayden was advised, "to thews and to sinews, /Achievement!" In Baughan's "Maui's Fish", great emphasis is given to the sheer effort of the landing of Te Ika.

Inseparable from Baughan's call for change, is her promotion of a fresh vision, one which retains the capacity to wonder, which perceives, and is not limited merely to seeing. Again the myth perfectly serves her message: her present tense, moment-by-moment eye-witness presentation of the birth of a new land forces precisely the transcendental perspective for which she aims: "new sights to new sight, a new world to new eyes" (p.59). She advocates a clear vision unjaded by familiarity, a seeing *as if for the first time*.

This chapter will examine Baughan's continuing push for change in the colonial text and context. It will consider first her use of the myth as a parable for debunking Anglophilia. It will then examine her use of the myth to promote the transcendentalist emphasis on "wonder" and a new way of seeing in an essentially *local* environment. Thirdly, it will consider the literary implications of the poem, and will detail the practical manifestations of her emphasis on change at a textual level.

**Making Changes: (a) Debunking Anglophilia: "They are old, are they therefore so wise?"**

In Baughan's rendering, Maui's older brothers represent Old World conservatism, and Maui, the spirit of revolution. Baughan follows closely the basic outline of the original myth as presented by the available translations - taking elements from both Sir George Grey's and from Richard Taylor's versions <sup>3</sup> - relying on amplification for dramatic effect, and adding detail to make her point.

In the legend, Maui has five older brothers. In Baughan's re-telling they are not simply older, but old. By portraying the brothers as old men she makes them more clearly represent the old regime at which she directs her barbs: as old men they are more effectively contrasted, to their disadvantage, with their young and virile brother. Throughout the poem, the resourcefulness of youth is played against the foolishness of the old.

I will consider first Baughan's method of injecting her message via seemingly minor embellishments of the traditional myth. In Grey's translation (p. 24), Maui, who had been refused permission by his brothers to go fishing with them, crept out when it was dark, and hid under the bottom-boards of their canoe. We can assume that the brothers were asleep, although this detail is not stated. In Baughan's poem (p. 44), the brothers are not simply asleep, but, in keeping with their Horatian satiric treatment, are *snoring*. When they should be alert, they have succumbed to over-indulgence (p. 44):

Late that night, when these Brothers, safe back from  
their fishing,  
Wearied with toil, snug and rounded with supper,

We noted in "A Bush Section" echoes and implications of Carlylean admonition of the idle upper classes. The Brothers' treatment here may be seen as a continuation of this. When Maui suddenly appears to the Brothers, popping through the floor boards, they are sent sprawling, "As huts in an earthquake,/Hither and thither they topple and tumble and sprawl" [as *passé* structures should] (p. 45). To keep the Brothers in mock heroic mode, Baughan chooses unflattering similes. She chooses a weka, a scavenger bird with gawky gait:

Now this way and that, as a weka, that peers for  
provision,  
With faces wrath-wrinkled as mud-holes are  
wrinkled in summer,  
They twisted their eyes and their necks . . .

(p. 46).

Again, adding a detail not in the texts, she has the Brothers debate what to do. They are made to seem ditherers:

"Who is safe from him? What shall we do?"  
So they toss back and forth in the unsteady hold of  
their purpose,  
Like river-waves, reaching the sea, but the tide  
flooding in.

(p. 46)

Their greed makes the Brothers easy targets for Maui's cunning. Like the regime they represent (according to Baughan), the Brothers want to cling to tradition - here, their old fishing ground. To persuade them to the open sea, Maui appeals to their stomachs:



I know of a place where the fish are as fern in  
 the forest,  
 So many! and fat as fat pigeons, and sweeter than  
 berry-fed pigeons, those fish!

(p. 48)

Maui's Man/God status suits Baughan's purpose here, just as Thor Rayden's similar fusion did in "A Bush Section", for her ideal colonial must be conscious of his transcendental destiny. Although Baughan is not promoting Christian propaganda here, several allusions to Christ underscore the ideal (and idealist) god-in-man/"tool of the Absolute" nature of her protagonist. The Biblical "Fisher of Men" finds an ironic analogy in Baughan's "fisher of fishers" who aims, with contempt, not at the heart and minds of his prey, but for their less dignified portions: "By the ear and the stomach he had caught them, these Brothers, these fish" (p. 48). The Christ allusion is suggested, too, in her description of Maui's serene calm as his brothers panic in the wildly tossing canoe, and in his lordly imperative, "Anchor and Fish!"

He [the sun] looked from the west, and their spirits grew  
 dark,  
 Their hearts roll'd in their breasts!  
 'Never man can have fish'd here before. Let us anchor!'   
 they pleaded;  
 And Maui said, 'Anchor and fish!'   
 For he knew where he was, and he knew where he  
 would be

(p. 49).

Again, the story suits her purpose: the Brothers, like the wealthy, property-owning classes they represent here, are determined to hold on to their advantages.<sup>4</sup> Even when the canoe is weighed down with fish, they refuse Maui bait for his hook. They own the canoe, and they dictate the terms:

Maui must bale, they will fish. Later, in a lovely reversal of fortune, it is Maui who hooks the great fish, and the Brothers who must bail for their lives as the canoe rocks alarmingly in a surging sea. The myth thus lends itself well to a parable of the over-turning of the class system - at least it does with a little help from Baughan. The small detail of the Brothers having to bail does not occur in the texts she is following, but it fits with her democratic New World utopia where all must earn their keep, and where enterprise will be rewarded: "Rich hauls to bold fishers!".

In keeping with her promotion of the New World spirit of enterprise, Baughan invests the Sea God, Tangaroa, with, as it were, a new portfolio. Maui gains his strength from his right relation with his god, Tangaroa, in tradition Lord of the Deep, as here. Baughan makes him also "Lurer to enterprise" (p. 50).

Another example of Baughan's insertion of a detail to make a point is found near the beginning of the poem. In the traditional myth, the brothers fear Maui's magic powers, and resent his superior cunning. Baughan's Brothers add to their complaints against him: "We are not too sure of his birth and his breeding " (p. 43) - even though according to tradition (and as Taylor points out),<sup>5</sup> all six sons were children of Tara-hunga, their father. The narrator refers to Maui's brothers as "the sons of his mother", so this imputation of less-than-blue-blood may be read as referring to the assumption of superior breeding by the upholders of tradition - the landed aristocracy. Maui's elder brothers see themselves as upholders of custom: "What reck's he of custom, time-honour'd ?" (p. 57) they ask of their despised sibling. In the final land-grabbing scene, they demonstrate that custom can be dispensed with when self-interest is at stake. Thus Baughan continues on from the ignoble nobility implications of "A Bush Section".

The contrast between Maui and his brothers, ennobling him, belittling them, is maintained throughout the poem. Maui is characterized by grand gestures, large deeds on an epic scale: "'Tis a whale. This great Maui! so mighty, no lesser fish suits him" (p. 51). In contrast, littleness attaches to the Brothers: they have "grimaces *nibbling* at their faces" (p. 56, my emphasis). Against Maui's authoritative ordering, the Brothers are said to be "pribbling and prabbling" (p. 59). We see the Brothers' indecision: "they toss back and forth in the unsteady hold of their purpose" (p.46), whereas Maui "Knew where he was, and he knew where he would be" (p. 49). Maui's youthful strength - "His back is bent, his muscles are tauten'd,/ Sweat pours in the sea" (p.51) - is set against their feeble timidity: they are "paddlers inshore" (p. 59). Lacking clear vision (literal and metaphorical), they "*peer* as a weka that peers for provisions" (p. 46), whereas Maui fulfils the requirements deserving of reward: "Rich hauls to bold fishers, new sights to new sight, a/new world to new eyes" (p. 59), for a "new world" is the transcendentalists' reward for those possessed of "new sight" - visionary perception. But no dignity attaches to the oldness of the brothers, certainly no reverence. Oldness here means *passé*, out-of-date. In fact the narrator asks pointedly, "They are old: are they therefore so wise?" (p. 59). The question sums up Baughan's attitude to old world institutions and customs.

In face of the upsurge in New Zealand of a "where Britain goes, we go" attitude bolstered in the early years of the century by propaganda supporting the Anglo-Boer War,<sup>6</sup> Baughan - via her narrator - implies a new questioning of hitherto applauded objects of British boasting: "With keen sight, with fresh forces, appraise those old grounds of their vaunting . . ." (p. 59). She would have found sturdy support from the American Transcendentalists. Emerson, for instance: "We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe . . . we

will walk on our own feet; we will work with our own hands; we will speak our own minds".<sup>7</sup> And, as we have seen, she had a staunch ally for her attitude here in her Australian contemporary, O'Dowd. Her stand against prevailing pro-British sentiment is most clearly demonstrated in her narrator's paeon to the new land:

Alive! Yea, Te Ika -  
Of the bone of the Past, of the Blood of the Present,  
Here, at the end of the earth, in the first of the  
Future ,  
Thou standest, courageous and youthful, a country  
to come!  
Lo, thou art not defiled with the dust of the Dead, nor  
beclouded with thick clouds of Custom . . . .

(p. 58)

We have seen in chapter two that although most of Baughan's literary contemporaries were still (in 1908) presenting New Zealand as a loyal outpost of empire, a few, such as A. H. Adams and Dora Wilcox were admitting to some advantages of the colony in comparison to Britain. But none is as boldly pro-New Zealand as Baughan is in this poem. Here her iconoclasm goes beyond a refusal to take on an inferior relationship to the Motherland, even going so far as to suggest a complete reversal of the trend, in implying that Te Ika should lead the Old World towards the future, "Like a beacon thou beckonest back o'er the waters,/away o'er the world:/The while, looking ahead with clear eyes . . . ." (p. 59). She scorns the "cultural cringe" in New Zealand colonial writing. The country's "upside-down", "end of the earth" geographical location in conventional cartography, has been seized on by poets as a metaphor for cultural deprivation - as demonstrated by her contemporary, Arnold Wall's, "Upon the giddy edge of the world we cling", quoted earlier, or more recently, by Curnow's "Not I, some child, born in a marvellous year,/ Will learn the trick of standing upright here".<sup>8</sup> Baughan reverses the

significance of New Zealand's geographical location. Te Ika is "At the end of the earth" surely, but, "in the First of the Future", and "on the edge of the world", but therefore "on the rim of the morning" (p.58), the first to see the sun, literally - or to see the light, metaphorically.

Baughan's determination to question the relevance to New Zealand of inherited customs is central to her message of change. Here, as in "A Bush Section", she suggests her absorption of the attitudes not only of the American Transcendentalists (such as Whitman demonstrates in his refusal to hero-worship those [undeservingly] in high office: "And I will make a song for the ears of the President/full of weapons with menacing points,/And behind the weapons, countless dissatisfied faces "),"<sup>9</sup> but of such eminent Victorians as Carlyle, Ruskin and William Morris. Carlyle, for instance, conveys much invective against Custom via the windy rhetoric of Professor Teufelsdröckh:

"Custom", continues the professor, "doth make dotards of us all . . . our very Axioms, let us boast of Free-thinking as we may, are oftenest simply such Beliefs as we have never heard questioned. Nay, what is philosophy throughout but a continual battle against Custom; an ever renewed effort to *transcend* the sphere of blind Custom, and so become Transcendental?

(*Sartor*, p.194)

In William Morris's utopia as conceived in *News From Nowhere*, his narrator says of Westminster Abbey, " . . . the inside . . . remains in its beauty after the great clearance, which took place over a hundred years ago, of the beastly monuments to fools and knaves, which once blocked it up".<sup>10</sup> A similar sentiment may be read in Baughan's lines expressing joy that the new land is not "defiled with the dust of the Dead" (p.5). Ruskin too spoke out against custom: " . . . so far as custom attaches itself to indolence instead of action, and to prejudice instead of perception".<sup>11</sup>

Baughan's anti-establishment censure is at its most trenchant in her changes to the traditional legend near the end of the poem.<sup>12</sup> Instead of the familiar ending in which Maui's brothers hack at Te Ika's flesh, Baughan, to accommodate a rebuke to European land-grabbers, has the foolish old Brothers rushing about frantically claiming this portion or that portion of land:

*His fish! Was it not our canoe?  
Come! They trampled his words underfoot, and  
leapt out on the beaches.  
'This is my land!' shouted one, and he set up his  
paddle upon it,  
'This to me!' 'This to me!' cried they all;  
they wrangled and strove.*

(p. 57)

As I suggested above, Baughan's message is also the necessity of struggle. In promoting this aspect she makes her point by putting great emphasis on detail merely suggested in the available translations. In Taylor's version, for example, there is no impression of great physical effort accompanying the landing of the great fish: "He let out his line, and there was a bite. The hook caught something, which pulled very hard, so that the canoe heeled over. . . he continued pulling in his line . . . he persisted in pulling, and at last the earth came up" (pp. 27- 8). Grey, too, makes the landing seem (compared to Baughan's version), easily accomplished:

*Then, feeling something on his hook, he began to haul in his line.  
Ah! ah! there ascended on his hook the house of that old fellow  
Tonganui. . . how his hook was strained with its great weight; and  
there came gurgling up foam and bubbles from the earth, as of an  
island emerging from the water.*

(p. 26)

Baughan again makes her point that great results can be achieved only by great effort. Despite divine assistance, Baughan's Maui must labour mightily to land his fish: "His back is bent, his muscles tauten'd,/Sweat pours in the sea . . . Pull! Pull!" (p. 51). Not for dramatic effect only does she extend Grey's and Taylor's meagre paragraph-length accounts of the landing to more than one hundred and eighty lines charged with action and anguish. There is to be no easy birth for Te Ika:

With the thought of his head, with the blood of his  
                   body, the sweat of his heart,  
 With pangs and with laughter, with labour and loss,  
 He truly had caught him a fish . . . .

(p. 55)

Here, as in all the allegories, Baughan demonstrates that she is no naive optimist. In "A Bush Section", for instance, we noted that her persona's sublime hopefulness for progress and change was checked by the "burden'd allotment" of present actuality. Here, the ecstatic vision of a utopia fished from the sea is balanced by its unavoidable accompanying "labour and loss".

**Making Changes: (b) The New Way of Seeing: "New sights to new sight".**

Baughan has a strong sense of theatre, and she needed it, not only to vivify the understated translations of Grey and Taylor, but to restore perceptual vision to colonists blind to the spiritual dimension of their life and land. Maui, like Thor, is god-in-man, and his right relationship with his gods is the essence of his success. From the moment Maui hurls his hook in the sea, Baughan attempts to raise the tone of the poem to fit epic expectations: language is heightened to match her larger-than-life protagonist. We noted in "A Bush Section" a similar elevation of language with the introduction of the

religious theme. She sets the tone with Maui's incantation, a plausible imitation of a Maori *karakia* used on such occasions:

He casts the hook into the Sea.  
 'Prosper it, O Tangaroa!  
 And Tangaroa,  
 Lord of the deep and the surface,  
 Lurer to enterprise, lover of daring adventure,  
 Heard!  
 .....

Hold, hook of noble extraction! Hold, trustworthy  
 well-twisted line!

(pp. 50-51)

As in the previous poem, to a significant extent, style is message. In her ecstatic presentation of the new land one is frequently reminded of the transcendentalist "way of seeing" as denoted by Thoreau's "Wisdom does not inspect, but behold!"<sup>13</sup> Indeed the miraculous birth of Te Ika is heralded in Baughan's version by that characteristic imperative of transcendentalist writing, "Behold!":

Behold, it approaches! it darkens, it pierces the water  
 - Lo! Lo!  
 Tree-tops! Lo, waving branches! Lo, mosses and  
 fern of the forest!

(p. 53)

Virtually every line is an exclamation. The resultant sense of surprise and "wonder" conveys the transcendentalist emphasis on a naive and unmediated response to nature, implicit in Carlyle's "to wonder is to worship". For an emergent literature, lacking yet a sense of identity, this attitude has significance, for the notion of *direct* apprehension dispenses with inherited and institutionalized modes of thought or conditioned response. It



is essentially democratic. According to the transcendentalists it requires only reverence of attitude to "look on Nature with the same eye, as when in the Eden of primitive innocence and joy".<sup>14</sup>

The first viewing of the new land perfectly symbolizes Baughan's description of her personal experience: "it is to gain a new world because a new view of the world". Consistently her aim is to force a new perception; her technique is to defamiliarize the familiar. Baughan's description of well-known topographical features as they come for the first time into view, is far removed from the language of geographical text-books. The style here recalls Whitman in ecstatic mode.<sup>15</sup> In her narrator's sonorous recitation of mountains and mountain ranges, the familiar is made unfamiliar as elements in a vision, her "new world to new eyes":

Thro' the waves, flashing!  
To the light, flashing!  
Bright, bright up-bursting, startling the light. -  
Oh, the sharp spears and spikes! Oh, the sparkle of  
summits of crystal,  
Springing up, up!

Tongariro! O Taranaki,  
Your splendour! your shooting of spear-points, keen,  
sea-wet, to the sun!  
Ruapehu, Kaikoura, Aorangi, Tara-rua, long-arm'd  
Ruahine! -

(pp. 52-3)

Baughan transmits a transcendental vision by maintaining a continuing sense of surprise, a sustained awareness of newness, a sense of seeing for the first time:

The glittering of you that morning! fresh, dripping  
with dew of the Ocean,  
New rays to the young, early sun!

(p. 54)

But the most significant embellishment or extension of the traditional myth is Baughan's lengthy epilogue concluding the drama. In this it becomes apparent that her emphasis throughout on the literal newness of the new-born land not only serves her call for a new way of seeing, it serves as well to introduce her promotion of a new way of saying.

### **Making Changes : (c) Literary Spinoffs : Toward a new Poetic.**

"Maui's Fish" may be read as Baughan's poetic manifesto, or as a re-emphasis on the literary program implicit in "Shingle-Short" and "A Bush Section". Here she advocates an original New Zealand based literature, one that is - emphatically - not taken unmodified from the parent culture. This, at least, is the implication behind her words, disguised as her speaker's advice to the "Offspring of Maui". I assume the Brothers' "old fishing ground" to refer here to Old World culture, and the "fish very long caught" to mean stale literary convention. References to a "living" quality, in this literary context, I read as artistic techniques still viable. Baughan's manifesto is summarized in eight lines:

Thou art new: be thou new!  
 With keen sight, with fresh forces, appraise those old  
     grounds of their vaunting,  
 Dip in deep dew of thy seas what swims yet of their  
     catch, and renew it, -  
 The rest, fish very long caught,  
 Toss it to them!  
 And address thee to catches to come.

(p. 59)

Baughan again anticipates here the basic tenet of Modernism, "Make it New!" It is important to note that her literary message in this poem is not simply

"Make it New", it is also "make it *yours*". It is most appropriate therefore that she uses an indigenous myth as her means of promotion. It is appropriate too, that she is seen to take her own advice in her experiments with prosody, syntax, and vocabulary in the poem.

Her "Dip in deep dew of thy seas" suggests that Baughan understood what few, if any, of her colonial contemporaries had fully grasped - that literary style must undergo a baptism, so to speak, in antipodean waters before it can be reborn as meaningful New Zealand art. It is not simply a matter of tacking local referents to otherwise unchanged forms and styles of the parent culture. Baughan's insistence that art should be "living" - therefore, one assumes, growing and evolving - is heavily underscored. In retrospect we can see that word clusters, "live"/"alive" "living"/"life", and the continuing "old"/"young" "living"/"dead" oppositions throughout the poem allude as well to the organic nature of a living literature, the moribund state of a static one. In "Maui's Fish" Baughan restates the literary message implicit in Thor Rayden's choice of "treasures": whatever "Moves and changes and lives", and in Shingle-Short's scorning of his conservative bosses' restriction to mere repetition: "They're circ'lar saws, a-cuttin' planks".

In "Maui's Fish" (p.59), Baughan's persona cautions the "Offspring of Maui" against the folly of prizing as living that which is in fact an overvalued corpse:

Offspring of Maui! recall the experience of Maui  
A dead fish he did not receive it? No, No!  
He endured, he adventured, he went forth, he  
    experimented,  
He found and he fetch'd it, alive!

Baughan proposes a bold assault on convention: "Rich hauls to bold fishers" (p.59). Not even the most ardent supporters for a "national literature"

went as far as she does here in her contempt for what she considers fossilized Old World art forms, "fish very long caught":

The rest, fish very long caught,  
Toss it to them!  
And address thee to catches to come!  
Rich hauls to bold fishers . . . .

Despite her call for change and experiment, however, Baughan herself clings to a considerable number of inherited literary devices and conventions that are far from new - Biblical phrasing and archaic inversion for example; and throughout, *Te Ika* is addressed in the second person singular. In what ways, then, can she be said to have done more than her contemporaries to help bring about in New Zealand the dramatic change of sensibility that was to have its fruition in the Modernist Movement? In what ways was she at least "modern" for her time?

We have noted her basic technique of defamiliarizing in regard to her presentation of the myth. It applies as well to her manipulation of language in its telling. In this poem, as in "A Bush Section", Baughan appears to be consciously following a programme of evading expectations, of defamiliarizing the familiar. Thus Baughan intuits a concept made much of by modern literary theorists,<sup>16</sup> but in fact one that has always been implicitly understood by those at the cutting edge of artistic development.

Baughan's phrase "renew it" demonstrates her understanding of the nature of originality in art - that there is virtually nothing that has not been attempted somewhere, in some form; that "making it new" is a process of renewal, of breathing life into a form gone stale, or of approaching an old idea from a new angle. Baughan's conscious attempts at renewal in colonial

writing come early in our literary history, at least a generation earlier, for instance, than Robyn Hyde's lines suggesting a similar understanding - that "making new" means making over:

I too am sold into strangeness,  
I too will look out of windows, thinking: "How fair!"  
or "Strange!"  
(Is ringo their word for apple)  
Yet in my heart can only dissolve, re-form,  
The circling shapes of New Zealand things.<sup>17</sup>

In the next few lines, Hyde demonstrates one of her techniques for re-forming the "shapes of New Zealand things". She subverts expectations by her choice of a totally unexpected word - "serious" - zaniily off-beat in its context:

That place trodden hard  
With the white cocks pecking in sun, their combs like  
dusty blood  
Under old pines, and the serious pungent macrocarpa . . . .

Baughan uses a similar technique. She too sometimes avoids a *cliché* by replacing the expected word with a surprising one, provoking reflection, for instance, "with the sweat of his *heart*" (p. 55, my emphasis), or "their horrified *feet*" (p. 45). And on a good many occasions she chooses a word that appears deliberately off-centre - "huge" and "gruesome", for instance, in the line, "huge is the night, and the loneliness gruesome" (p.44), or "conspicuous" in "Splendid with freshness, radiant with vigour, conspicuous with hope" (p.58). Similarly, she uses "audacious" in an unexpected context: "audacious with newness" (p.54). "Flocking", in reference to fish, surprises: "at one cast of his hook, how they came flocking"(p.49). The word "fold" acquires novelty when applied to undersea currents, as in "fold upon fold of the sea" (p.53). Or she may defamiliarize her subject by attributing to a natural phenomenon its

opposite and unnatural quality - firmness, for instance, of clouds - in "How firm, great white clouds, ye took seat!" (p.53). This recalls her "in mists of the mountain/Tangled" in the previous poem, in a similar way subverting the essential misty quality of her subject.

Baughan evades expectation here too, and gives a "modern" impression in introducing what seems to be a deliberate coarseness in her choice of vocabulary and her inclusion of "syntactic angularities" giving rise to occasionally hobbling rhythms in the poem. It was this quality of "ruggedness" one remembers, which most won praise from - or most provoked the ire of - her contemporary critics. Here, as in "A Bush Section", she neatly fuses style and message: a rough and raw style for a rough and raw colony. To this end she sometimes disrupts rhythm by the insertion of an awkward, unwieldy word such as "disentangling" in the line, "And, up-coiling his line, disentangling his fish hook, now Maui laugh'd also" (p.55); or "misadventures" in "If we go on, misadventures are bound to befall us" (p. 46); or "*karakias*" in "Murmuring *karakias*, secretly chanting enchantments" (p.47). Baughan sometimes does violence to conventional syntax in a way which once prompted a critic to comment that "sometimes the lines seem more like a literal translation from a foreign language".<sup>18</sup> And they do. Consider, for example, "A dead fish he did not receive it?" (p.59) or, "they murmur admiring, in envy they muse, and amazement" (p.49).

Baughan again takes up a defamiliarizing technique, this time an aural one, already used in "A Bush Section". She defies Edwardian predilections for euphonic verse in her application of the hard-hitting emphatic consonant sounds of Old and Middle English oral poetry - but characteristically evading expectations, often avoiding the regular rhythm typical of the prototype, for instance, "And summe merthis to maken, // as mynstrales cunne".<sup>19</sup> Baughan

takes her own ("make it *yours*" ) advice by sometimes adding one or more syllables, usually between alliterating words. For example, she disrupts balanced phrasing by inserting three extra syllables, "the top of", in the line , "Found this fellow, sprawl'd on the top of a sudden-rear'd mountain" (p. 57). Similarly, she adds "of summits" in, "Oh, the sharp spears and spikes! Oh, the sparkle of summits of crystal!" (p.52). Occasionally, she reproduces both the alliteration and the rhythmic beat of the archaic model: "Is there Sun in the Sea? a young Sky in the water?" (p.54); "Border'd with foam, with fine fringes of sand" (p.55); "Full belly, sound sleeper, is simply outwitted" (p.45).

Baughan's presentation of archaic alliterative metre and phrasing in a new setting of early twentieth century poetry makes it new in the same way that virtually any object out of its context can, if displayed as work of art in a modern gallery, acquire un-thought-of connotations, and an ambience of originality. It is her variations on the original, however, that most contribute to the effect of surprising newness - her refusal to be held to a predictable rhythm. She continues to experiment with "sprung rhythm" - or at least with its two salient features - its emphasis on the strong stresses, and their dispersal juxtaposed at any point of the line: for instance, "How firm, great white Clouds ye took seat!" (p.53); "Seas! he threw seas overboard" (p.47); "Her brown limbs gleam from the bath" (p.58); "A green sea, high in the air" (p.54); "The wild winds are her walls" (p.58).

In keeping with her call for an indigenous poetic, Baughan makes good use of local material. She offers many striking similes and metaphors taken from Maori tribal life or from natural objects:

Sharp howls the wind, the old Sea moans there over  
his shoulder -  
As a widow, a mother, they wail, at a death, at a

*tangi*;

(p. 44)

Maui's powers of persuasion appropriately translate as, " his tongue was of oil, and his words as a feast in the cooking" (p. 48). The river and lake-studded headlands are "tattoo'd with blue" (p. 55). The nettled old Brothers have "faces wrath-wrinkled as mud-holes are wrinkled in summer" (p.46). Their foolish ineffectiveness is mercilessly conveyed in appropriate similes:

With grimaces nibbling their faces, with eyes and  
 with mouths round as sea-eggs,  
 They squat on their haunches, stuck still:  
 Dumb as heads in the old days held fast in the mouth of the  
 oven,  
 Dumb as fish. . .

(p. 56)

Baughan takes her own "be thou new" advice too, in her continuing experiments with the device of repetition. Here, for instance, she effectively repeats and reverses the words "death" and "darkness" in:

As a widow, a mother, they wail, at a death, at a  
*tangi*;  
 And the Darkness was dreadful all round, a deep  
 darkness of Death!

(p. 44)

"Sun", "water" and "paua" are similarly manipulated in:

And paving its hollow with blue-and-green *paua*,  
*Paua*, purple-and-blue in the sun as the shimmering  
 water,  
 In the sea-water, bright as the sun.

(p. 44)

The importance of literary experiment to Baughan is suggested by the vicarious attribution to her protagonist of a determination to experiment: she



adds a new virtue, "he experimented", to Maui's traditional heroic deeds. It is significant, too, that her description of his achievements and attributes closely parallels her requirements for renewal of art: endurance, boldness, a capacity for experiment, and a concern only with a "living" catch:

He endured, he adventured, he went forth,  
                   he experimented,  
 He found and he fetch'd it, alive!

(p. 59)

In "Maui's Fish" we see a similar fusion of person and persona as we noted in the Thor Rayden/Baughan and Shingle-Short/Baughan liaison. Baughan, too, is Maui - at least, she is the Maui that she remakes in her own image. She too is the youngest sibling who mocks convention and attempts bold experiment. She too finds a new land. She too is convinced of the animate condition of the apparently inanimate. She too questions self-appointed authority. Obviously, Baughan chose carefully a protagonist who neatly parallels her own experience and point-of-view in significant ways; and characteristically, she adds detail to make her point. To those who knew her, Baughan was notoriously unconcerned with observing social conventions or with taking note of what small-minded people might be saying.<sup>20</sup> Her Maui is advised not to "regard overmuch/Those tedious old Brothers", that still must be "pribbling and prabbling" about him.

In "Maui's Fish" Baughan makes her most passionate appeal for her twin concerns: to "Make it New", and to "make it *yours*". Baughan at this time is plainly taking the business of poetry very seriously indeed. I suggest that "Maui's Fish" deserves serious consideration, both as an item of literary historical interest as an early example from a poet with a mission to "modernize", and as a literary work in its own right. Perhaps we may need to

look a little further back in our literary history than Curnow did, in suggesting that it was Cresswell and Mason who first "[took] poetry seriously" in New Zealand.<sup>21</sup>

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## Notes.

<sup>1</sup>Helen Barnhill's M.A. thesis *The Pakeha Harp* concerning the vogue for translations from Maori legend deals effectively with the poem as a *translation*. I will concentrate on the poem as a vehicle for a message of change in the colony, and as a medium or exemplar for change at a textual level. Barnhill concentrates on the work of four poets: Alfred Domett, Arthur Adams, Jessie Mackay and Blanche Baughan.

<sup>2</sup>By "modernism" I mean the signs in Baughan's work, not apparent in the work of her contemporaries, of a seemingly conscious revolt against traditional literary forms and the religion and myths of her British cultural past.

<sup>3</sup>Sir George Grey, *Polynesian Mythology and Ancient Traditional History of the New Zealanders*, ed. W. W. Bird, (Christchurch: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1959). Richard Taylor, *Te Ika a Maui or New Zealand and its Inhabitants* (London: Wertheim and Macintosh, 1855).

<sup>4</sup>"It's a fine challenge to the ancestral selfishness by the ordinary Englishman and I rejoice to see it", was Baughan's reaction to the reform bill of Welsh liberal politician, David Lloyd George, introducing taxes on land in his 1909 budget (letter to Miss Higgins, 11/8/1909, MS Papers 198, WTu.).

<sup>5</sup>Op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>6</sup>For instance, *The Canterbury Times* (26/2/1902, p. 43) reports that the Seddon Testimonial Committee were engaged in a nation-wide campaign to collect signatures to a petition to the Prime Minister, declaring their heart-felt

... appreciation and approval of the prompt and practical proof you have given of the sympathy of your fellow-colonists with the Motherland in South Africa. Loyalty is but kinship written large, and every man and woman of the colony is proud of the crimson thread which makes the people of New Zealand loyal sons and daughters of the British Empire.

<sup>7</sup>"Emerson", *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1912).

<sup>8</sup>"The Skeleton of the Great Moa in the Canterbury Museum, Christchurch", *Allen Curnow: Selected Poems* Auckland: Penguin Books (N.Z.) Ltd, 1982, p.77.

<sup>9</sup>"Starting from Paumanok", *Poetry and Prose*, p.179.

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<sup>10</sup>*Three Works by William Morris* London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1968, p. 211.

<sup>11</sup>*Munera Pulveris* in *The Works of John Ruskin*, library edition, vol. XVII, eds., Cook and Wedderburn (New York: George Allen, Longmans, Green and Company, 1905), p. 233.

<sup>12</sup>In her M.A. Thesis, *The Pakeha Harp*, Helen Barnhill looks for an authentic rendering of the traditional legend, and objects, not unreasonably, to Baughan's alteration to Grey's version of this final scene. These alterations, Barnhill complains, result in a loss of the "essential Maoriness" of the original, which emphasized the importance of preserving the correct rituals. And of course they do, to a certain extent, but Baughan is not primarily concerned with retelling the myth *per se*: she is making use of the myth to make a point, and none of her divergences is gratuitous. The inherent difficulty is that the point and purpose of the Maori legend (for Maori), and its colonial analogy, are diametrically opposed. The first urges the need to observe time-honoured customs; the second urges the destruction of time-dishonoured customs - "They are old: are they therefore so wise?" Change, and the need to change, is the new emphasis and message.

<sup>13</sup>*Walden*, op. cit., p. 228.

<sup>14</sup>*The Transcendentalists: An Anthology*, ed. Perry Miller (Harvard University Press, 1950), p. 165.

<sup>15</sup>In "Song of Myself", for instance:

Smile O voluptuous coolbreathed earth!  
Earth of the slumbering and liquid trees!  
Earth of the departed sunset! Earth of the mountains misty-topt!

(*Leaves of Grass, Poetry and Prose*, p. 47)

<sup>16</sup>The Russian Formalist critic Victor Shklovsky wrote, "The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects "unfamiliar", to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged . . . ' (Lee T Lemon and Marion J. Reis, eds., *Russian Formalist Criticism* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), p. 22.

<sup>17</sup>"Journey from New Zealand", *Selected Poems*, ed. Lydia Weavers (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 72.

<sup>18</sup>The comment is by Richard Pinfold, written on the title page of P. A. Lawlor's copy of *Shingle-Short*, currently held in the Hocken Library, Dunedin.

<sup>19</sup>William Langland, *Piers Plowman*, ed. Walter Skeat, A Prologue, p. 6.

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<sup>20</sup>B. S. Burns gives examples of Baughan's non-conformist tendencies and eccentricity in her *Biographical Details of Blanche Baughan*, and in several additional anecdotes. MS Papers 198, WTu.

<sup>21</sup>*A Book of New Zealand Verse*, "Introduction", Part 5 (1951 edn. ) pp. 24 ff..

## CHAPTER SEVEN: "BURNT BUSH".

### (i) Ideas in the Poem:

(a) The Subjective Nature of Perception (p. 165).

(b) One-ness: a Fusing of the Personal and Colonial aspects. (p. 170).

(ii) Literary Spinoffs (p. 173).

Endnotes (p. 177).

### (a) The Subjective Nature of Perception.

"Burnt Bush" may be seen as a continuation of Baughan's attempt to counteract perceptual blindness in the colonies by defamiliarizing the familiar. Again, the generating power behind the poem is her concern for change, and her interest in perception. And again, Baughan's acceptance of the inevitability - and desirability - of change has a logical spin-off in textual innovation and experiment.

Baughan here chooses a mode perfectly attuned to her program, for the poem may be read as an updated version of the medieval dream vision. The uncertain and ever-changing perceptions of dream vision allow a rich complexity of interwoven planes of interpretation. We are reminded again of Emerson's maxim "salvation is visual".

Ostensibly, the poem may be read as another variation on a theme popular at the time, of regret for the passing of the great forests, and of whether colonials were justified in causing their destruction. On a philosophical plane it may be interpreted as an attempt to find unity and wholeness in both the local/exterior and personal/interior landscape. Baughan continues to instruct us on the basics of transcendental idealism, as she reads them: subjective perception, holism and change. First to be

considered is Baughan's assault on perceptual blindness by a process of defamiliarizing the colonial vista.

In "Burnt Bush", as in traditional dream poems, the main substance is a dream or vision, dreamed by the "I" of the poem. The opening of "Burnt Bush" for instance, has parallels with Langland's *Piers Plowman*. Piers, in typical dream-poem fashion, wanders alone, pauses to rest, and falls asleep by the side of a stream:

I was wery forwandrit, // and wente me to reste  
Under a brood bank, // be a bourne side,  
And as I lay lenide, // and lokide on the watris  
I slomeride into slepyng, // it swiyed so merye<sup>1</sup>

Baughan's "I" too, muses alone beside flowing water - in this case a river. Piers' first vision is of a "fair field ful of folk". Baughan's narrator is suddenly surrounded by alien presences:

But to me in my musing,  
As on the low bridge in the depth of the gully,  
At the fall of twilight I linger'd alone,  
Suddenly, silently,  
Startling my spirit,  
Peopled the air was!

(p 64)

We are not told in so many words that the narrator has fallen asleep, but we may assume by the line "And, listening, the *heart* of me heard" (p. 64, my emphasis), that s/he is now operating on a mystical, and not a physical wavelength. The dream-vision concept of the poem may be read as the search for, and finding of, enlightenment. In the poem that illumination brings the transcendentalist holistic overview.

In its opening verse paragraph, "Burnt Bush" is clearly related to "A Bush Section", both in style and content. Again we open to a fire-ravaged landscape. Again, the disturbing intensity of Baughan's metaphors forces a closer scrutiny of the scene, and a reappraisal of first impressions. There is more than a topographical import in a scene presented as a ghoulish cadaver: "Sharp on sheer sky gape the lips of the gully" (p. 63). As in the earlier poem, metaphors connote a battle-field, for here, not logs merely, but "burnt bones" of the bush are strewn "headlong and helpless". In the context of battle, the "limbless" trees are ghastly amputees. The connotations of battle attune the colonial situation to Hegel's "struggle is the law of growth". I will return to this aspect presently.

This poem was probably written soon after Baughan's transcendental enlightenment - as she saw it - in which she became intensely aware of the unity of all creation, despite apparent differences of form. The notion is paralleled in Emerson's "the ploughman, the plough, and the furrow, are of one stuff, and the stuff is such . . . that variations of form are unimportant". In "Burnt Bush", Baughan manipulates this idea of fusion:

Suddenly, Silently,  
 Startling my spirit,  
 Peopled the air was!  
 Pulsing the gloom!  
 Presences alien, undescried, flitting,  
 Fann'd me with hosts of impalpable pinions,  
 Knock'd at the gates of my sense, but not enter'd,  
 Throng'd thick around.

(p. 64)

"Knock'd at the gates of my sense, but not enter'd", indicates a transference to extra-sensory perception, the mystics' wavelength. Somewhat



like Alice's Cheshire Cat, the "Presences alien" are both there and not there. "Undescried" and "impalpable" convey the characteristically amorphous nature of dream vision. The passage above is reminiscent of Whitman in "Starting from Paumanok":

Melange mine own, the unseen and the seen,  
Mysterious ocean where the streams empty,  
Prophetic spirit of materials shifting and flickering around  
me,  
Living beings, identities now doubtless near us in the air  
That we know not of, . . . .<sup>2</sup>

Baughan, like Whitman, seems intent on conveying the transcendentalist notion of the blurring of distinctions between the spiritual and the temporal. We may recall Emerson's comment, "there [is] no bar or wall in the soul where man, the effect, ceases, and God, the cause, begins", and Baughan's enthusiastic agreement: "Chorlton!!".<sup>3</sup>

Mangi, the River/persona returns in the dream to the remembered former life, "In this, your returning,/I, too, return" (p. 64), but finds the once-familiar is now the unfamiliar, "Mid a world that I know not, of worlds that were mine" (p. 66). Ostensibly, "the worlds that were mine" are the once-familiar aspects of the original pre-fire rain forest, and the "presences alien", the spirits of the destroyed flora and fauna - but, again, there appear to be personal/national implications.<sup>4</sup>

The idea of oneness, and the perception of oneness, is conveyed in the easy melting and merging and transposition between personae and landscape, flora and fauna. The poem may be read as a search for wholeness afforded by the transcendentalist overview. It seeks to reconcile relationships both

human and non-human, and opposites - joy and suffering, and finds a solution in line with Hegel's understanding that:

any single proposition or set of propositions that is less than the complete system of propositions will turn out to be self contradictory; only in the complete system are contradictions reconciled and falsity removed. This complete system does not *correspond* to reality, it is reality - the one reality, the one subject.<sup>5</sup>

Baughan here exhibits the idealist perception that it is the essence of objects to be correlative to states of mind. Her dream vision landscape is endowed with a marvellous plasticity: what the persona perceives, *is*. The plural sorrowing and wailing "presences alien" blend and become the single and personal apparition of the lost love. The fluctuating significance of the symbolism reflects the changing perception of the viewer. It explains the interchangeable nature of the metaphors - general to personal, plural to singular, masculine to feminine, sorrowing to ecstatic.

For instance, although the river Mangi represents the lost lover mourning his beloved, the role of lover and loved appear to be interchangeable. Mangi (ostensibly male) mourns a multiplicity of tree spirits (the "Brethren Beloved"), but these specifically named tree varieties, taken together, represent the "Burnt Bones" of the bush - the singular (female) lost love. And despite the plurality and masculine gender of the Brethren, they dissolve, as it were, into a single female form at the moment of mystical union:

Soft Arms of the Coolness,  
Deep Breast of the Beauty  
Of old that embraced me:  
Now - no way otherwise -  
Ghostly I greet you!

(p. 64)

The transition of the ostensibly masculine plural "Brethren Beloved" to a single female entity is suggested at several points by the imagery which clearly connotes a one-to-one physical relationship:

... thus may I meet you,  
Once more, - enfold you,  
Feel you, regain you,  
... and bathe in your being  
Thus, for a moment again ...

(p. 66)

And Mangi, too, is sexually ambiguous, for despite his masculine pronoun, he suffers metaphorical rape from a female point of view:

All the night long  
Now, unmelodious, barren, unfragrant  
Unillumin'd of loving, unhallow'd of healing,  
Weighs and presses the undesir'd Dark:  
- I must endure it!

(p. 66)

In typical dream-vision fashion, one level of meaning blends into another, leaving room for a variety of possible interpretations, but preserves Baughan's message of fusion into One-ness.

### **One-ness: a Fusing of Personal and Colonial Aspects.**

As in the previous poems considered, the notion of one-ness is expressed, as well, in an apparent fusion of a personal and a colonial allegory. One suspects some self-referring allusions, for instance, in Mangi's reference to himself as "the sole relic" of the life that he knew. This links back to Thor

Rayden's situation as last of his line. (It links forward as well to Hine's soliloquy - in "The Paddock" - in which the old woman too, sees herself as the remnant of a lineage: "But what successor to me? . . . A plank cast-off from the house of my kinsfolk - I, I only, am left" [p. 185]). These metaphors of separation may be read personally, or equally as alluding to colonial separation from the motherland. "Barren", as it occurs in the poem, can be taken literally, as the condition of the cut-over landscape, or metaphorically, as the (then) current state of the literary landscape, or biographically, as an oblique reference to the inevitable condition of the enforced single state. The references to a feared humiliating exposure - undefined - are probably, in one sense at least, biographical. In "Burnt Bush", the destruction of the bush reveals all. Baughan's persona reads the horror of exposure into the scene:

All the day long,  
Now, cruel-eye'd, o'er the wide wound about me,  
The raw devastation, the uncover'd Death,  
Stands scrutinizing, the terrible Sunlight.  
- I must confront it!

(p. 66)

"Silence", like "sole relic", "uncover'd Death" and "barren", may be taken as *double-entendre*, "silence" referring as well to Baughan's self-imposed silence concerning her past. In this context, for "Burnt Bush", read "Burnt Baughan". It may be no coincidence that the metaphor and its creator share the same initials. It is possible, if unlikely, that these seeming self-references are not *consciously* intended, but even the most determined reader-response critic would have difficulty in denying that they are *there*. One needs to bear in mind that Baughan was conscious of the unashamedly subjective Whitman: "Camerado, this is no book,/Who touches this touches a man" (*Poetry and Prose*, p. 611).

Her attitude to the poem's ostensible subject, the destruction of the primeval forest, is consistent with the transcendentalist one that sees apparent contradictions as resolved in the totality. Thus Baughan presents a landscape (metaphorical and literal) that is both "mutilated", yet "Whole, unwounded".

At the commencement of the dream vision sequence, we recall that the narrator's heart had taken over from his/her ears: "the heart of me heard". We may assume we are back to reality when the narrator's normal hearing is restored - s/he no longer hears "with the heart", and hears now, aurally, "Nought but the flowing of water" (p. 67). With the fading of the dream vision, the emphasis changes from bemoaning what has been lost to a cheerful welcoming of what has been gained: "Old trees, but new timber". In Baughan's use of the device of dream vision to convey the acquisition of transcendentalist perception, we are reminded of Emerson's observation, "Our eyes are holden that we cannot see things that stare us in the face, until the hour arrives when the mind is ripened; then we behold them and the time when we saw them not is like a dream" ( "Spiritual Laws", *Essays*, p. 88).

The achieved transcendentalist overview here recognizes the local issue as Man *and* Forest, or, more precisely, Man and Forest in *the One*, as opposed to the usual (at least as a subject of poetry), Man *or* the Forest dilemma. Whereas other New Zealand writers on the theme, such as W. P. Reeves in "The Passing of the Forest", or Dora Wilcox in "Ode to the Forest", end their poems still immersed in romantic despair, Baughan accepts with enthusiasm the inevitable change of hierarchy as the children of Tane are overtaken by the children of Man:

Through the Burnt Bush, and the little bare  
settlement,

Lo! transmuted but vital as ever,  
 (No more fern, from green branches no  
 more,  
 But from flesh-and-blood tissues. . .  
 . . . laugh'd out the old magic  
 Of Nature, wise Mother of Forest *and* Man.

(my emphasis, p. 67)

The "and" in the line above is significant. Baughan's strong concept of the unity of all things saves her from the Man-versus-Nature dichotomy exhibited by her contemporaries. Her point is that since the human species and other forms of nature are equally emanations of the One, it matters not in the overview which form has the ascendancy. Baughan's attitude here is another illustration of the significance of her transcendentalism as a major contributing factor to her difference from her New Zealand contemporaries. Bemoaning the loss of the old, whether of cultural or historic links with the Old World or of the apparent destruction of Nature, as here, was far more commonly a theme amongst her colonial/Edwardian colleagues. Baughan's enthusiasm for the new, summed up in her cheerful conclusion (with its obvious application to the local literary landscape): "From the dead forest/(Old trees, but new timber)" is again reflected in innovation at the level of the text.

### **Spinoffs in the Poetic Text.**

Experiments with perspective and point-of-view attempted in the macro/micro focus of "A Bush Section" and in the alternating fish/new world (literal)/New World (transcendentalist) symbolism of "Maui's Fish", are taken up here in a complex *melange* of reference points. Reversals of expected syntax contribute to the defamiliarizing process: "Now, cruel-ey'd, . . . Stands, scrutinizing, the terrible Sunlight" (p. 66); "Peopled the air was!"

(p. 64). Or, Baughan may ignore grammar and give us what appears to be calculated clumsiness: "Knock'd at the gates of my sense, but not enter'd".

The dream-vision setting for what must be one of the most "modern" verse paragraphs in New Zealand colonial poetry, is a striking example of Baughan's awareness of the resuscitative power of unexpected juxtaposition. I commented briefly on her evocation of atmosphere by the insertion of unexpected and unexplained metaphors, forcing the interpreter to question and to probe beneath the surface. Pastures, for instance, are not simply blackened with charred remains of the bush, they are "burden'd" with black. Why? Why, in the face of the expected poetic "postcard" depictions of the New Zealand landscape, does Baughan concoct a death-mask analogy, evoking insidious intent: "Sharp on sheer sky gape the lips of the gully"? Why has the removal of foliage revealed "uncover'd Death"? Why are the usually benevolent connotations of sunlight exchanged for malevolent ones: "terrible" Sunlight, "scrutinising" Sunlight, "cruel ey'd" Sunlight? Why is the burnt-over pasture seen as a "wide wound"? Baughan insists that we see more than surface "actuality".

It is not known if Baughan was influenced by the Symbolist Movement directly, but one is reminded of Rimbaud's aim of a "systematic derangement of all the senses" in her use of sense transference in such phrases as "the heart of me heard"; "Soft arms of the Coolness"; "thinness of Silence" or "Weights and presses the undesir'd Dark". The surreal, perverse and sinister tone of some of her metaphors - "void light", "cruel-ey'd" Sunlight, - have a French Symbolist ambience. Whatever the source of inspiration, Baughan plainly makes language as well as concept contribute to her program of making strange, forcing new perceptions.

Most of Baughan's defamiliarizing devices encountered in "A Bush Section" and "Maui's" Fish" recur in this poem, although often with some variation here. For instance, the medieval flavour imparted by frequent alliteration and (occasional) balanced phrasing is further enhanced here by the addition of the dream vision format. Traditional alliterative metre is retained in such lines as, "More pleasant than prattle of pebble with rapid" (p. 65) or "Limbleless, and leafless, and lifeless for ever" (p. 63), but again we find experiment with variations of the archaic strong-stress metre resulting in something reminiscent of Hopkin's "sprung rhythm", for instance in "Sharp on sheer sky gape the lips of the gully" or "more pure, smooth, cool" (p. 65) or "Ah, all the long day through" (p. 65).

Baughan's determination to evade expectations is manifested, too, in her frequent changes of rhythm and line length. Her sensitive ear for a well-placed pause is demonstrated in the "pause . . . and run on, pause . . . and run on", movement of this passage:

. . . . Hark! Is it true? The twitter of locusts,  
 More pleasant than prattle of people with rapid,  
 Again? . . .  
 O flute of the Tui!  
 More pure, smooth, cool,  
 Than coolest and clearest upbubbling of water . . .  
 O rustle of rain!  
 And the music, rising and falling,  
 The singing of leaves and boughs,  
 Sweet word of the wind - Oh, again do I hear  
 you, again?

(p. 65)

As well, the passage demonstrates her confident manipulation of repetition. The word "again" is three times repeated, and is effectively echoed by the insertion of a rhyming word, "rain", amongst the otherwise unrhymed



free verse lines. Expectations of euphony are disrupted by the inclusion, occasionally, of aurally awkward gaucheries such as "scrutinizing" here:

Now, cruel-ey'd, o'er the wide wound about me,  
The raw devastation, the uncover'd Death,  
Stands, scrutinizing, the terrible Sunlight.

(p. 66)

In fact in those three lines, four devices of estrangement are deployed: calculated aural discords, unexpected juxtaposition - "terrible/Sunlight" - macabre metaphor (in God's Own Country!) - "uncover'd Death" - and unexpected syntax - the subject ends the sentence. In the passage from which the quotation above was lifted, Baughan attempts something "new" in New Zealand poetry - obviously sexual imagery. Her rape metaphor ("Weighs and presses the undesir'd Dark:/I must endure it!") is bold, daring, and new in 1908. These devices are commonly found in Modernist poetry. They are certainly unexpected in a volume published in Edwardian New Zealand.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>B Prologue, op. cit..

<sup>2</sup>*Leaves of Grass, Poetry and Prose*, p. 181.

<sup>3</sup>Baughan writes "Chorlton!!!" alongside Emerson's comment in "The Over-Soul", on p. 161 in her personal copy of *Emerson's Essays and Representative Men* (London and Glasgow: Collins' Clear-Type Press[1905 (?)]).

<sup>4</sup>Helen Barnhill in *The Pakeha Harp* (p. 221), admits to some confusion as to the nature of the "presences alien". This is hardly surprising. One needs to suspend Earth-bound logic here. Also, a knowledge of the biographical referents is needed to recognize *double-entendre* when it occurs.

<sup>5</sup>*A Dictionary of Philosophy*, op. cit., p.129.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: "THE PADDOCK".

- (i) Introduction (p. 178).
- (ii) Elizabeth's Monologue: the Work Ethic; Knowing One's Place (p. 181).
- (iii) Janet's Monologue: a Feminist Perspective; Escaping Restrictions (p. 184).
- (iv) The "Song of the Wind": the Long View, Exposing Human Myopia (p. 189.)
- (v) Hine's Monologue: Change, and the Penalty of Not Changing (p. 193).
- (vi) Literary Spinoffs: Make it new/Make it yours (p. 199). Endnotes (p. 205).

**(i) Introduction.**

In the last, long<sup>1</sup> work of the volume Baughan again debunks some old icons. Again she attempts to "localize" transcendentalist concepts by means of an indigenous *dramatis personae*, and by transplanting its ideas into a local New Zealand form of expression. There are signs of a new maturity as she translates her concern for holism into a new international outlook: "This paddock's but a paddock - I was born/Into a world!" (p. 171). Again, we may note an apparent connection between her transcendentalist/New World orientation and the "modern" elements in her work.

The central Whitmanesque motif, the "constant becoming", is provided here by the three central figures, for they represent the eternal cycle: youth, maturity and old age. All three may be read as universal archetypes as well as local and colonial. Elizabeth, for instance, at the local level, is a hard-working farmer's wife, and on an allegorical plane is an archetypal Earth Mother, totally fulfilled with her traditional female role. Janet, her much younger sister, who longs to escape the limitations imposed by the Paddock, may be seen as representing the

"New Woman", a hypothetical creature much discussed in our newspapers (especially in "Women's" pages) in the early years of this century. As well, she stands for the creative colonial, dissatisfied with a life consumed by practicalities. Third in the trinity is Hine, an ancient Maori woman of noble lineage, who senses her approaching death, and struggles to accept its inevitability. On a universal scale, she represents the noble savage. Her inclusion gives Baughan the opportunity to comment, by implication, on a topic frequently discussed in colonial writing, that of the post-European Maori. But she has another function: her whole extensive monologue may be read as an elaboration of the concept of change.

Baughan's non-human *dramatis personae*, too, have the function of making indigenous, certain fundamental transcendentalist concepts. Opening and closing the central drama, and intersecting it, are the "songs" - six lyric pieces - "Song of the White Clover"; "Song of the Strawberries and Sunbeams"; "Song of the Creek"; "Song of the Wind"; "Song of the Seeds" and "Song of the Ti". These have been described as serving "merely as choral context, backdrop, for a human drama".<sup>2</sup> They do certainly serve as choral context, but not "merely" as such - indeed, the more substantial of them - "the Song of the Wind", "The Song of the Seeds" and "The Song of the Ti", vie with the human characters in significance. In a later poem Baughan wrote, "What, must flesh and blood/Be soul's one vesture? who would have it so/Not yet hath understood". Not for nothing does she allow elements and plant life to speak in their own voices. *They* have no doubt about their place and significance in the scheme of things. Baughan's according here of equal status and significance to all forms of creation, animate or (apparently) inanimate, finds many empathetic echoes amongst the American Transcendentalists - Whitman, for instance: "Do you guess I have some intricate purpose?/Well I have, for the Fourth-month showers have, and the mica on the side of the rock has" ("Song of Myself", *Poetry and Prose*, p. 205). Through the

"songs" Baughan transmits the transcendentalist overview, constantly pointing up aberrations in human-scale perspective. The "Song of the Ti" is, in effect, the epilogue of the work. It is in the Ti's song that one is best able to appreciate the complex fugue-like composition of the work as a whole. All motifs, major and minor, are woven into its elaborate coda.

The quotation "This paddock's but a paddock - I was born into a world! Let me out into it!", which Baughan puts into the mouth of her new generation colonial girl, Janet, suggests a considerable maturing on the part of her creator. There is a marked tempering here of the passionate nationalism that characterized "A Bush Section" and "Maui's Fish". In the former, we recall, Thor Rayden is set to start afresh, freed from "the battle-field bones of a ruin'd epoch"; in "Maui's Fish", Te Ika, with fresh, unclouded eyes, leads the Old World towards the future: "Like a beacon thou beckonest back o'er the waters". But here, what shrinkage these islands have undergone in Baughan's conception! They are reduced to a paddock, merely! Her character Janet, who may be seen as representing the young New Zealand-born generation, longs to escape the restrictions of the Paddock - for here Janet is handicapped with imagination, and to her, the fence which keeps in the sheep (literal and metaphorical), keeps ideas, adventure, opportunities and culture out. All things wonderful have become associated in her imagination with a semi-mythical Old World not yet seen. It is the place where "things have happened", where "famous folks live", and where place names - "London" and "The Rhine" have acquired a romantic aura.

The exploitation of the weak by the strong, of the lower order by the British ruling classes, was seen in "Maui's Fish" as an Old World ailment, thankfully not present, nor to be tolerated, in this untainted utopia. In "The Paddock", exploitation is seen to be alive and well in these islands; it has merely taken on a new disguise and has moved lower down the pecking order. Here the new land-

owners, the colonial middle classes, have acquired land and promoted their culture at the expense of the indigenous people who have lost both their land and their life-style. And these hard-working and newly-prosperous farmers, having obeyed the Protestant work ethic and fulfilled the fervent hope of Baughan's persona in "A Bush Section" ("To thews and to sinews,/ Achievement!"), are seen to have achieved material prosperity, but to lack imagination, to have become insular.

### (ii) Elizabeth's Monologue.

It is unfortunate that this work, which contains much fine writing, should open with a fairly slight song followed by a long monologue-prologue explaining in rather tedious rhymed couplets the events preceding the opening scene. Elizabeth's monologue is undoubtedly the weak point in the total work. It has not aged well. Ears attuned to modern poetry expect referential aspects and logical connections to be "backgrounded" in the Formalist sense - suggested paratactically - not "explained" in monotonous detail, as here. Baughan's verse/prose drama appears to have been overlooked by critics, with the exception of P. C. M. Alcock, who considers that "The Paddock" contains "the most important and ambitious writing in her book".<sup>3</sup>

The opening lyric, the "Song of the White Clover", introduces three major themes amplified elsewhere in the work: the work ethic; the relationship of the parts to the whole - the individual spheres of activity, and the inter-dependence of the bio-system. It is a sprightly entree which in a live performance would probably be set to music. It could be choreographed to advantage as well. The slightness of the lyrics suggests the expectation of such audio-visual aids. "Song of the White Clover" sets the scene for a joyous and busy country morning:

The lark, already hid in height,  
 Rapturously sings;  
 The bee, already, hangs on bright  
 Sun-warmed wings.

(P. 137)

The White Clover rejoices in its appointed task:

I, too must fill with all my might,  
 Faithful, my place,  
 And flush with freshest green-and-white  
 This Paddock-space.

(p. 137)

This theme of acceptance of given limitations is later reinforced on a human scale by Elizabeth's happy acceptance of her lot within the narrow confinement of the Paddock, from Janet's perspective, a symbol of colonial limitations and insularity - although, as we shall see, the nature of the symbol changes with the viewer. The Clover's refrain is echoed later by the Strawberries: "How round within our narrow niche/We glow!" (p. 153). The White Clover's song implies an ordered universe and a pre-ordered allocation of duties. Clover rejoices in knowing and filling his "place". In Whitman's, Emerson's and Carlyle's work Baughan would have encountered a similar idea.<sup>4</sup> This second motif of individual spheres of duty is related to the third, the inter-dependence of nature and the elements:

... A patch of pasture, nibbled bare,  
 Dewless and dry  
 Green seas of Growing shall enlap,  
 Narrow and overflow the gap -  
 Hither, and help! O Earth and Air,  
 Sunshine and Sap.

(p. 138)

Elizabeth, as I suggested, takes up White Clover's theme of happy acceptance of her "place". This almost too virtuous wife and mother - totally happy, totally fulfilled - is virtually a clone of Ruskin's unrealistically ideal woman as promoted in his essay "Of Queen's Gardens".<sup>5</sup> Certainly, Ruskin would approve of Elizabeth's piety. She ends her monologue with an emotional prayer of thankfulness. She sees her present happiness after years of struggle as "a living spring" (p. 150):

Welling, swelling, filling up  
Even this, my deepen'd cup  
Filling up? Ay! brimming over . . .  
Oh! it is too much for me.

It is, alas, too much for Baughan as well. The passage descends to *schmaltz*. The verse as well as the fountain is "gushing, rushing, welling free". It is likely, however, that this surfeit of saccharine is deliberate. Elizabeth's simple faith is given free reign, perhaps the better to contrast with harsh reality to be conveyed later in the "Song of the Wind".

All Baughan's colonial protagonists must undergo a trial by hard labour; joy must be earned. The Protestant work ethic merges imperceptibly into the idealist emphasis on struggle: struggle as the law of life, the law of growth. Baughan, characteristically, avoids predictability, and here allows Elizabeth to depart from the womanly paragon type to accommodate Protestant/idealist rigour. Elizabeth slogs alongside her man, breaking in the land:

. . . so we went to work, we two.  
Built and blasted, stump'd and sow'd  
Logg'd up, dug, and drain'd and hoed,  
Milk'd of course . . .



(p. 144)

Counterpointing the theme of conscious effort is the Strawberries' contented inertia: ("They also serve who only stand and wait"):

The bud a blossom would become,  
The flower for fruit is asking;  
But ye have added up your sum,  
Be busy but with basking!

(p. 154)

The final couplet compresses a founding notion of transcendentalist holistic philosophy - the conscious or unconscious urge of all created forms to return to the One: "Longing's to parts and portions lent/Unto Completion comes Content" (p. 154). Exit Strawberries and Sunbeams. Enter Janet.

### **(iii) Janet's Monologue: a Feminist Perspective.**

A short prose section, to be acted, introduces Janet, the second of the central trinity. Janet, an orphan, is in the care of her elder sister, Elizabeth. She lives on the farm, earning her keep by helping with the housework and farm chores. She grows increasingly restless, torn between her awareness of debt to her "mother-sister" and her growing resentment of the limitations of her life within "the Paddock's" borders. There is thus a clash of archetypes: Earth Mother versus (would-be) Career Woman. Baughan here, as elsewhere, is concerned to highlight the subjective nature perception. To Janet, fences are fetters, to her sister they are protective and comforting. "Fences" (from Janet's point-of-view), may be read as limitations, both self-imposed and inherent in the country's geographic situation and historic dislocation from European culture. Elizabeth, on the other hand, has willingly cocooned herself within layers of enclosures. Innermost is her home and family ("Heaven's inside four walls" [p. 164]; beyond that is the Paddock ("with its arms about them all")); and beyond that, the mountain range, which,

with its "blue and silver wall/Guards and crowns and closes all" ( p. 140 ). She rejoices in her insularity. Janet looks at those same mountains and sees not protection, but obstruction. Baughan has coined the word "unbudging" to underline their intractable blocking connotation.

Janet's free verse monologue plays on the underpinning concerns of freedom, change and perception. However, preceding her appearance is the third Lyric section, the "Song of the Creek", introducing, in keeping with Janet's situation, a mood of restlessness and youthful frolic. The Creek's song forms a prelude to the major theme of escape/freedom in Janet's solo part. It personifies her spirit. Following its natural bent to spread and expand it eventually runs under the fence - "and out!", foretelling symbolically Janet's eventual escape from man-made enclosures, man-made limitations.

A second and conflicting motif now introduced, and later amplified in the "Song of the Wind", is the illusory nature of freedom. The Creek implies some vaguely comprehended divine will controlling its apparent freedom:

On, still on! I know not whither,  
Only, that which brought me hither,  
Hither urged me on and on,  
Hence compels me to be gone.  
Forward!

(p. 159)

With Janet's entry, nearly four hundred lines of vernacular free verse/prose replace the rollicking couplets of the Creek's song. The spirit of restless energy is taken up in Janet's *joie de vivre*: "Oh, I'm all on tiptoe to . . . to . . .well, I don't know what; but something/*quick!* /Something adventurous, spirited, energetic,/Live!" (p. 160). But her delight in the fine spring morning is tinged with envy, for everything around her is "Free to be free". But Janet must return

to her housework. Like a prisoner marking off the days till her release, she calculates: "Four years, . . . say seven-and-forty solid months,/Over a thousand days! . . . I've faithfully/Roasted and fried, made beds, and bread-and-butter,/Scrubb'd, rubb'd, and all the rest - with what result?" (p.162). One can feel, behind Janet's lines, Baughan the ex-Suffragist and feminist in her empathetic presentation of Janet's frustration, the universal cry of unfulfilled housewives:

Oh! haven't I done enough? And, when it's done,  
What does it amount to? Where's it gone?  
That is the worst of all!

(p. 162)

From here on the work gains in quality and strength. Janet becomes increasingly consumed by the need to be "used up" - to find something big enough,/difficult enough, to engage her whole capacity. "What is *Living*? " she asks, "eating up sheep and wearing out your socks?" (p.163)

The question illustrates Baughan's totally unromantic perception of the housekeeper's lot. This is a breakthrough in colonial/Edwardian writing, a debunking of the long-suffering paragon stereotype of Romantic fiction. Even Edith Grossmann's feminist-inspired heroines are not as down-to-earth as Janet.

Culture-starved, Janet has to suffer the boredom of brother-in-law Andrew's nightly reading "aloud, of wheat and wool" - a trenchant metaphor for colonial philistinism. She questions her sister's idealizing of the home life, yet perceives why the simple daily routine, so trivial to her, is more than ample for Elizabeth, for her sister has been "born with a magnifying heart" and is able to see "more than is there". What is wonderful to Elizabeth, to Janet is "wonderfully dull". The idealist notion of the subjectivity of perception, implied in the over-all structure of the work, and taken up later in the "Song of the Wind", is given its

human-scale voice in Janet's ruminations on the subject (the literary significance of this passage is considered on pp. 202-203). Janet is a New Zealand-born colonial. Culture-starved, she longs for:

. . . the whole live  
 world with all one's ever read about,  
 To see, and test, and tackle and take in.  
 - Think . . . Home! - old cities - London, and the  
                                   Rhine -  
 Places where things have happen'd, famous folk -  
 Music (Ah me!), palaces, ships, and soldiers -  
 Swallows, and cowslips . . . .  
                                   plays -

(p. 169).

She may be seen as representing a third generation. Thor Rayden, in "A Bush Section", was European-born and was presented as having escaped all that was wrong with the Old World. Elizabeth and Andrew in "The Paddock" are the next generation, totally engrossed in the here-and-now practicalities of farm life. Janet, though nominally of the same generation, is much younger than her "mother-sister" and represents a turning of the corner in attitude: she is aware, not of the short-comings in Old World institutions, but of deficiencies in her own land. For her, as for many of her generation, all things English have acquired glamour. "Swallows and cowslips" have a romantic aura that tuis and tree-ferns have not. The land she has never seen is accorded capital letter status - "Home" - the imagined *turanga wae wae* of her soul. Her longing for "Places where things have happened" points up the tedium of the Paddock where things have not happened. Her need to "test", "tackle", and "take in", highlights the lack of challenge offered within its borders.

We are reminded of the idealist insistence that "The deepest law of politics is freedom - an open avenue to change". The on-going struggle for freedom and

liberation, which characterized the earlier allegories, is taken up most emphatically via Janet. Using her characteristic method of accumulation, Baughan develops the motif of bondage:

... here I'm caught and caged,  
 And can't get out! Oh, on a day like this,  
 When everything just teems with life - the grass  
 So glad, the sky so gay, the light and air  
 So large and bright and racy, and young things  
 Frisking about, tingling with joy:- *I* tingle,  
 I stretch and strain, I flutter - but I'm tied!

(p. 170)

Janet imagines herself, too, a tethered wild thing: "It makes me tug and tear/To snap my rope, escape, break loose, go . . . go! . . . " (p. 170). But she is aware that bonding is binding, is bondage. Family ties rope her to the fenceline. Janet's "I want transplanting" (168-9) may be taken as a caution against colonial insularity, a plea for expanding one's horizons, and for taking the rest of creation into account.

Baughan's insistence on an appreciation of a holism applies at an individual level, as well as at a universal one. She believed passionately in the engagement of the whole person in whatever path was chosen. Her comment, "Unless she marries a man, every woman must wed a work"<sup>6</sup> is translated into Janet's horror of being only "half-used":

... Janet? Cook? Housekeeper?  
 Nonsense!  
 I could be work'd to death that way, and die  
 Only half-used - No, I've a whole use, somewhere,  
 If only I could find it.

(p.167)

Finally, Janet realizes the impossibility of staying: "This paddock's but a paddock - I was born /Into a world! Let me out into it!" (p. 171). Janet has outgrown the colonial mentality, she sees herself as international. And by implication, Baughan herself seems to have moved away from the parochial pro-New Zealand stance adopted in "A Bush Section" and "Maui's Fish". Although some criticism was implied in the earlier poems, here it is plainly stated. "This paddock's but a paddock" is a frank admission of colonial deprivations and limitations.<sup>7</sup>

Later, "The Song of the Seeds" picks up Janet's theme of the unstoppable urge to grow and to burst through restraining integuments, echoing too the Creek's need to expand and to move ever forward. Janet's soliloquy was preceded and is followed by two apt emblems of restlessness - the turbulent Creek before; and to follow, a fickle and unpredictable Wind.

#### (iv) The "Song of the Wind".

In the "Song of the Wind" Baughan most clearly states her message of change:

Hither and thither hurtled and hurl'd, -  
By the blow and blast of the breathing World,  
By the send and suck of the seething World,  
By the changing want, by the changed will,  
Of the changed and changing World!

(pp. 178-9)

Here again Baughan reveals the driving power behind her single-minded pursuit of change and renewal. She conceives of a Whitman-like World spirit (his "Santa Spirita") that is not a static presence but a perpetual becoming. Whitman writes, "All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses "':<sup>8</sup>

The heavens and the earth and all things within their compass . . . (such is the doctrine of Hegel) all form a complication, a succession of steps, in the one eternal process of creative thought . . . A curious triplicate process seems the resultant action; first the positive, then the negative, then the product of the meditation between them; from which product the process is repeated and so goes on without end.<sup>9</sup>

One needs to readjust constantly to Baughan's changing length of focus - the long view provided by the "Songs", and the human-scale vision of the three women. Elizabeth's faith in her personal benevolent God becomes irrelevant in the long view which focuses on the ever-evolving One:

Within whose opal and iris eyes  
Birth has being and being dies  
By whose opening or closing hand  
Growth's green fire is foil'd or fann'd

(p. 179).

The Wind is cheerfully indifferent to human survival, human extinction: "A friend a foe, will I scatter and stow,/Further and foster, threaten and throw" (p.180). The "Song of the Wind" makes relentlessly what Whitman called "Kant's tremendous and unquestionable point," namely, that " . . . what we realize as truth in the objective and other Natural worlds is not the absolute but only the relative truth from our existing point of view".<sup>10</sup>

The Wind answers Janet's rhetorical question, "Why are we given minds/That want to wander so, if where we are/Is meant for where we should be? Are our feet roots?" (p. 170), for it finds itself "*Fastened* to Flying, to Fleeting *bound*". The Wind acknowledges "*A Rule a root* to [its] flying foot,/A *ring* to [its] restless round" (p. 178, my emphases throughout). Janet imagines unlimited freedom beyond the Paddock's fenceline: "openings and chances - doors ajar, and roads . . . leading all sorts of ways" (p. 173). But, humans, like the Wind, the Creek

and the Clover may pursue freedom only within limited boundaries: Elizabeth is "Monarch, servant" just as Thor Rayden was "Tool, yet employer,/of Forces Almighty". Janet has yet to discover her natural boundaries. The creative spirit will seek them out. Ultimately, in her urge toward wholeness, she is doing actively and consciously what the White Clover does passively and unconsciously in finding its prescribed fenceline. Janet, restless and creative spirit, is like the Wind - the "would-be-wanderer" is also the "must-be-wanderer". This notion of submission to the Unity/the One, is frequently expressed by the American Transcendentalists. Emerson, for instance, writes of " . . . that unity, that Over-Soul, within which every man's particular being is contained and made one with all other . . . to which all right action is submission."<sup>11</sup> The striving for freedom is balanced in Hegelian dialectic by the essential restraining power of order.<sup>12</sup> This is the implicit message of the Wind's song.

In the "songs" Baughan continues her exploration of perception and perspective. The "Song of the Wind" provides a transcendentalist overview to place in perspective the three central characters. Baughan's vision here recalls Emerson's understanding of world as both a mosaic, and a unified picture which admits of no fragmentation. Within her unified picture she is able cheerfully to yoke joy and ghoulish horrors - for instance, in the juxtaposition of "frolicking feet" and "the battered face of the dead", and in the deliberate mismatch of rollicking rhythm and shocking image in the Wind's song as it dances merrily over a battle field:

Over a paddock of wither'd wheat  
 I danced, with the snow and sleet.  
 Under the wasted harvest-yield,  
 The soil lay sodden and red,  
 And the floor we beat with our frolicking feet  
 Was the batter'd face of the dead.  
 (Sow, reap!  
 Slaughter, and sleep)



I danced, and away I fled.

(p. 175)

And similarly, within that unified picture she is able to admit the depths of human emotions, to give human achievement its full recognition and at the same time see humanity as buffeted by the whims of creation: "By whose opening or closing hand/Growth's green fire is foil'd and fann'd" - and by no means indispensable to it.

Here again there is an obvious link between Baughan's transcendentalist orientation and a "new" aspect of her work. The "new" aspect is her break with English-derived poetry's Christian orientation, and her exchange of the clichés of Christian iconography for a new - new in New Zealand - unsentimental holistic overview. We have seen that holism in Whitman's terms accepts evil as the inevitable concomitant of good: "[as] shade to light".<sup>13</sup> And Baughan, in the "Song of the Wind", exhibits a similar accommodation of evil as an unavoidable facet of Creation's constant striving for perfection. Whitman writes:

According to Hegel the whole earth . . . with its infinite variety . . . [is] to the eye of the *ensemblist*, but necessary sides and unfolding different steps or links in the endless process of Creative thought, which, amid numberless apparent failures and contradictions, is held together by a central and never-broken unity - not contradictions or failures at all, but radiations of one consistent and eternal purpose; the whole mass of everything steadily, unerringly tending and flowing toward the permanent *utile* and *morale*, as rivers to oceans.<sup>14</sup>

The two concepts - unity and "constant becoming" - are inherent in Janet's situation. Her perception that "This paddock's but a paddock" has, as well as the socio-political significance mentioned, a transcendentalist reading, for she sees her little land as but a fragment of the whole: "I was born into a world". Her restless urge to be other than she is, is the human-scale evidence of the constant becoming.

In the brief linking prose section following the "Song of the Wind", all the major themes so far mentioned are inherent in the meeting of Janet and Hine: mutability, mortality, the cycle of life, and the displacement of the weak by the strong. But the nature of the exploited and the exploiter has changed. The overthrow of the indigenous culture by the European provides the leitmotif for Hine's lament. This third soliloquy is perhaps the most aesthetically successful segment of the work.

#### (v) Hine's Monologue.

The whole of Hine's monologue elaborates on Baughan's message of change - resistance to change, understanding change, acceptance of change. Preceding Hine's soliloquy, however, is the fifth song, "The song of the Seeds" (pp. 182-4). In four compact stanzas Baughan inserts this minor key echo of Janet's major lament, resented confinement - and at the same time she neatly dove-tails a prelude to Hine's reluctance to accept death:

Must we, indeed, and in such haste, resume  
Blindness and narrow room?  
Must all these ready riches thankless lie?  
Behold, we are but just now born, and must  
We down into the dust?  
Yea, must we die?

The mood of the lyric moves from despair to resignation to ecstatic anticipation:

"Go down! that from the clay  
Up ye may rise! in clean,  
Sweet-colour'd sheen.  
Poor yet, and unprepared, were it not well  
Humbly awhile to dwell? -  
That soon, with brave fresh dazzle and delight  
Strongly upbursting out of dust and taint,  
Impearl ye may and paint

Day's radiance bright!

(p.183)

Thus "The Song of the Seeds" echoes symbolically Janet's temporary bondage before her flowering as a whole person, and anticipates as well Hine's eventual awakening into paradise. The song backgrounds Hine's literal (stage directions given) simulated planting activities.

In the free verse of Hine's soliloquy, Baughan uses expansive rhetoric to infuse the soliloquy with a nobility of tone and a high seriousness. A series of rhetorical questions provides the framework of the piece, interspersed with passages of reverie in which the old woman recalls the days of her youth. Hine's monologue works by an accumulation of details into fully inflated metaphors and epic similes. It is a method which, by its nature, cannot be adequately conveyed by short extracts. It may be illustrated by three central elegiac stanzas in which Hine intuitively and eloquently expresses the central theme of "constant becoming" as she senses her approaching death. Each verse opens with a question, and closes with the same line - with a slight variation on the third repetition - "and Lo! that is, which was decreed to be". Baughan achieves great resonance in the repeated last line: there is perfect congruity between unchanging line and unchanged message:

Ay, who hath ever known one year,  
Sunny and windless all its days?  
The Summer gleams and glows,  
Bright berries burn . . . .  
Then, Winter howls!  
The south-wind bites like salt, the white frost bites,  
The glow is fled, the glory all is gone,  
And Lo! that is, which was decreed to be.

Or, what bay feels a tide forever full?  
Bright Toe-toe and green grass line it with sheen,  
The tickled pebbles laugh,  
The deep swell sways . . . .  
From bubbling ooze the mud-crabs sidle out

The beach is silent, the clear lustre lost,  
And, lo! that is, which was decreed to be.

(p. 191)

In the third verse she includes human decrepitude as part of the inevitable ebb and flow of nature:

Or, what young man is man for ever young?  
His eyeballs beam; his thought flieth like the wind;  
hope marries with his heart,  
Strength with his hand -  
Then comes Old Age!  
Tired, tired his heart, and his full strength a sleep.  
The glow is fled, the glory all is gone,  
- Lo ! that which was to be is that which is!

(pp. 191-2)

In each verse a short sharp line - "Then winter howls", "Then comes the ebb", "Then comes old age" - ushers in a change of mood, a downward gyre in the eternal fluctuations of nature. The line last but one, repeated exactly in the first and third stanza, is omitted in the second - for Baughan takes care not to be predictable. She avoids a cliché, "the glory is all gone", by reversing the order of "is" and "all". Her subtle change to the last line brings out the shock of recognition that she, Hine, too, is subject to the ebb and flow of nature. "That which is" when moved to the end of the phrase highlights the present tense, links Hine's present state to a decree aeons old.

In Hine's opening lines, "A burden alike is this heat/and the want of this heat is a burden,/To backs bow'd down with the years" (p.184), Baughan displays again her characteristic use of repetition and reversal, concisely summing up her protagonist's condition. Clearly the ancient one has lived to an age when comfort is no longer possible. Hine's message is of loss - of her children and husband, of

her youth, of the old ways, of her tribe, of the mana of her people. Change and resistance to change is her real subject. Baughan veers off predictability, even in her archetypes. Visually, Hine is far from the noble savage ideal. From Janet's point-of-view she is "a hunchy, bunchy lump of tatters and tattoo" (p. 155). There is, as well, a severe dislocation between the Maori and the Pakeha points-of-view concerning the relationship between the colonists and "the poor old creature" (as Janet calls Hine) and Hine's impression of the effects of the European settlers on herself and her people.

Well versed in her *whakapapa*, Hine is keenly aware of her lack of a successor and the inevitable break in the line. Her plaintive rhetorical "where?" persists like recurring pain:

And where, O Hine! are they,  
 Sprung from the loins of thy sons,  
 Or fed from thy daughters' breasts  
 To step to thy side, and take  
 The toil from this tremulous hand?  
 Ay, where?

(p. 184)

The passing of the forests, cheerfully dispensed with in the interests of *Pakeha* progress, in "A Bush Section" ("Green bush to the Moa, Burnt Bush to the resolute/Settler!"), is mourned by Baughan's representative Maori - as is the comfort of the once familiar raupo roof:

And the *raupo* roof with its kindly coolness,  
 To shelter my head -  
 The dark, still air of the silent forest,  
 To lay, like a leaf, on these quivering eyeballs -  
 Where?

(pp.184-5)

Hine draws a parallel between her own situation and that of the lone, decaying ti tree surrounded by imported deciduous varieties:

O *Ti*,  
In soil of the Maori, 'mid turf of the *Pakeha*  
Thou, in like manner, ancient exceedingly,  
Standest alone. Thy dry leaves rattle.  
Thou, too, standest alone.  
Where are thy fathers? Where are thy brethren?  
Thick, round about, stand the trees of thin foliage,  
From over the sea waves: -  
But where are thy seedlings? Our saplings, where  
    flourish they?

(p.185)

Baughan's confident handling of repetition is revealed in the resonant "Standest alone . . . standest alone" and in the sad chiming "where?". She compresses whole attitudes into her chosen metaphors. In allocating "Soil" to the Maori, but only "turf" to the *Pakeha*, Hine implies a shallow-rooted, tenuous occupation, a merely legal possession of the land by the Europeans. For the Maori the relationship goes deeper. Her people are rooted in its depths, and derive their spiritual health from its nourishment. The use of "thick" and "thin" in the context, neatly compresses Hine's feeling about the invading culture. "Trees of thin foliage" as metaphor for the European settlers implies something ungenerous, thin blooded and chilly in their make-up. "Thick round about, stand the trees of thin foliage" suggests that no communal warmth emanates from their increasing numbers.

The shock encounter of an unlovely iron roof amid images of natural objects effectively symbolizes a harsh and threatening intruder on what was Maori land (p. 193):

Lo, where the quick wind smites thine old tresses,

Under them, over them, glancing between them,  
 Sharp to the eye, sharp to the heart,  
 Glitters the iron roof of the stranger.

Its hideous glittering announces its insensitivity to its surroundings. Baughan avoids the South Seas paradise vision of happy (post European) Polynesian life. For Hine, mana has been stripped from her people, "Oh strong the stranger! tall *Karaka*-tree:/Glossy with oil the bright leaves of his branches. - We, the shed berries beneath!"(p. 186). All mana seems to have passed to the *Pakeha*, whose cultural advantages make him so successful a go-getter, pinpointing his target and striking out for it with the deadly accuracy of a gannet:

As the plunge of the *Takapu*, straight is his  
 speeding:-  
 Frost-fish, we make for the shore!

(p. 186)

Then follows an eloquent recollection of times past, illustrating, incidentally, Baughan's considerable knowledge of *Maoritanga*.

Hine's escapist daydreams of past joy alternate with an awareness of present-day reality and a growing recognition of the need to let go of life. The resultant rapid succession of conflicting emotions from one paragraph to the next gives Baughan full scope to exploit the dramatic potential of Hine's situation.

"Warmth" with its connotations of communal *aroha*, is remembered as a natural comfort to the elders of an earlier generation:

While the ancients, gathered together,  
 Their bodies in warm repose,  
 In their spirits are playing and swaying also  
 together,  
 Reciting, recounting, the one with the others,  
 Which the canoe was, who the descendants . . . .

(p.189)

Their communal life, emphasized in "together", "the one with the others" and "their bodies in warm repose" is set against her isolation "where no voice comes", and intense coldness, physical and spiritual:

It was, long ago - it is gone!  
 O my flock of white sea-birds, my children! Paoa,  
 O husband! . . . .  
 Where the cold wind wrinkles my skin,  
 Where no voice comes, I lie.

(p.189)

**(vi) Literary Spinoffs: Make it new/Make it yours.**

The rhetorical style of Hine's monologue, and the use throughout of the second person singular, detract from the impression of innovation in the prosody of this section. Nevertheless Baughan appears to be consciously trying out with new effects. The free-flowing prose/verse paragraphs, unpredictable rhythms and visually untidy lay-out is in sharp contrast to the work of her contemporaries - typically rhymed, aurally predictable, and arranged in neat stanzas.

I noted elsewhere the complaint of an early critic of *Shingle-Short*, that it was impossible to tap the feet for very long to her rhythms. This is certainly true. Here (p. 86), for instance, a reader listening to the sentence sounds may be lulled by the nearly identical rhythms of such lines as:

And the house of the youthful, the house of the  
     dancers,  
 Was ample and high:  
     The carv'd hall of meeting, the house of the  
     entertain'd,  
 Spacious and warm.



However, s/he may be surprised by extra syllables in the following lines (p. 187):

A white mat, a fine mat, a mat for a chieftain,  
A mat with gay borders, yea, fringed with a thick  
fringe of feathers,  
An heirloom mat for the tribe.

There is considerable variety, too, in the way Baughan uses repetition. Five words are repeated in this short section (p. 187):

The sun reddens, the sun flashes.  
Bright in the eyes he looks . . . bright in the forest . . .  
Ah, ha he flashes  
On eyes in the forest!

Sometimes she adds alliteration, as in: ". . . Dark now/It grows; the hour of darkness,/The hour of darkness and dread!" (p. 188). Or she may juxtapose two homonyms, as for example, ". . . if one of my tribe I was verily one,/One with my tribe let me be" (p. 193). In the next line, "count" thrice repeated conveys the strength of Hine's death wish: "Count, count, count me among them,/O Death! for it is enough". Frequently a word gains resonance and significance as it recurs intermittently, setting up an echo, as it were. "Where?", "Who?", "Enough", and "Rest" acquire reverberations in this way. Typically, when a word is repeated intermittently, Baughan changes its part of speech. "Rest", for instance (pp. 195-6), appears as a verb four times, three times as a noun, with a variety of punctuation marks altering its inflection. The techniques themselves are not new, but Baughan's attempt to manipulate such a variety of them in colonial/Edwardian poetry, is unusual.

New, or at least unusual, for the time it was written, is Baughan's empathetic understanding of Maori spirituality. There is not the assumption of

superiority of Western/Christian culture that pervades much colonial writing. However, we need to beware of Baughan's transcendentalist double perspective, which applies to Hine's situation, as to everything else. Her contact with European society has left Hine confused as to the nature of the after-life that awaits her. *Maoritanga* proves more potent: it is to Rangi and Papa she prays to prosper the harvest. It is the spirit's leap from the rocks, of Maori tradition, that she sees before she dies. Hine's clinging to her traditional culture receives empathetic treatment at a *human* level. In the overview it does not. Hine's rhetorical, "But what successor to me?" - her questioning of the demise of her people - is answered implicitly in her own paeon to the past - her own inability to adapt. In her backward-looking perspective Hine reiterates the cautionary tale supplied by the unadaptable, and therefore extinct, moa of "A Bush Section": "Green bush to the Moa! Burnt Bush to the resolute settler!" Hine "falls into a sleep from which she will not awake".

Consistent with her "make it yours" programme, Baughan again capitalizes on her knowledge of *Maoritanga* to produce some strikingly original metaphors, for instance:

On the head once admired and perfumed  
     *the weeds of tura* [Grey hairs] lie thick  
 (Old heads tell the truth - they turn pale, confessing  
     that courage is lost)

(p. 194).

And (at least to a *Pakeha*), she sustains a convincing ambience of *Maoritanga*. Instinctively Hine thinks of herself not as a separate person, but as a continuation of a lineage - "Daughter of Te Rawhiti, daughter of great Tipitai,/Daughter of Kapu" (p. 192). Easily and without strain, Baughan draws on Maori mythology for

imagery. In the passage to follow, there is a lovely bathetic anticlimax as Hine, self-mocking, compares herself to the great Maui:

Who, then, art thou,  
 Hine, O presumptuous one, . . .  
 That thou alone should'st elude the experience  
     eluded of no man?  
 - Who thou, thyself?  
 Maui perhaps? Art thou even as Maui, thou  
     totterer?

(p. 192)

However, Hine's monologue is less rewarding for seekers of signs of innovation than some other segments of "The Paddock" - or the work taken as a whole. In the first place, the form of the work itself is new. There appears to be no precedent for such a dramatized oratorio<sup>15</sup> - for want of a more precise classification - in New Zealand writing. Again Baughan demonstrates her willingness to re-introduce an old form in a new context, for the work is distantly related to seventeenth century masque in its inclusion of solo and choral parts, spoken word, song and dance (at least suggested), and acting, within its design. Although no maskers or visual spectacle are explicitly envisaged, the wearing of masks for the non-human participants could well have been intended, since speaking elements and plants demand a stylized treatment. That Baughan had one of the great masque writers, Ben Jonson, in mind is suggested by occasional faint echoes of his lines.<sup>16</sup>

Baughan's interest in perception is most effectively demonstrated in "The Paddock". The passage concerning Janet's ruminations on the difference between her way of seeing and her sister's, seems surprisingly "modern", both in subject and expression, for 1908 New Zealand verse:

Liz? Why she never sees the work, at all -  
 She sees us, past it, . . . twice our natural size;

And that's enough! To stir our porridge stirs  
 Her blessed heart; our mutton feeds her soul -  
 She lives! because she loves. And, since she lives,  
 Everything's live to her; like dull side-streets  
 Yonder in town, to one that knows the way,  
 The little dingy duties lead her out  
 To the big, main, exciting thoroughfares.  
 The world sits in the Paddock, and all's well.  
 - Eggs are Americas! and milking means  
 Commerce! Art sets the patches in the shirts;  
 Wash-day's a glorious, weekly Waterloo . . .  
 . . . And Heaven's inside four walls!

(p. 164)

This is not simply a new way of seeing in colonial/Edwardian poetry, it is also a new way of saying. What marvellous compression! A whole complex theory of perception summarized in three words - "Eggs are Americas!" I noted earlier, the conflicting tendencies in Baughan's work, of long-windedness and compression. "The Paddock" further demonstrates this. Here and there in its sixty-eight pages one discovers marvellous little nuggets of hard compression, like "the world sits in the paddock" above, or "our mutton feeds her soul". The new way of seeing - perceiving - has given birth to a new way of saying - a new precision, a new compression. And we see here further evidence of her innovative domestic metaphors. Elizabeth feels no need for extra-mural art; for her, "Art sets the patches in the shirts". And for her, hankerings after fame and glory are entirely satisfied by victory in the battle of the weekly wash: "Wash-day's a glorious, weekly Waterloo". But Janet's perception is entirely other. It would be difficult to imagine a more apt simile to sum up frustration in enforced domesticity than Janet's:

So you're all right, Liz!, You're used-up and  
 happy.  
 But I'm not. It's like stuffing darning-wool  
 Into a sewing needle - most stays out,  
 And what's got in is no particular good.

(p. 164)

Aberrations in human perception are shown up by non-human personae. In contrast to Janet's longing to escape the Paddock where nothing happened, the Ti, with its awareness of wheels within wheels, sings of great drama being enacted in that same paddock (p. 204):

- Yea, though root and leaf decay,  
Still incessant, night and day,  
Through my lowly passage-way,  
Do Divine Transactions run,  
And Deathless deeds are done.

Baughan breaks with Edwardian elegance in the startling realism of her imagery. The harsh reality of "where the cold wind wrinkles my skin" links back to "glitters the iron roof of the stranger" and forward, in its chilling effect, to "from bubbling ooze the mud-crabs sidle out" (p. 191). The new unsentimental "realism" of Baughan's imagery cannot be better illustrated than in Hine's visualization of her finished and useless life as a clump of seaweed, rotting on the kumara patch, "It is dry, it is brittle; ah, ah, it is dingy, it stinks!" (p. 190), or in Janet's "... what is *living*? Eating up sheep, and wearing out your socks?"

In her portrayal of Janet, Baughan sets up a radical alternative to the conventional home-centred woman, here represented by Elizabeth. With Janet, Baughan answers Whitman's call in "Democratic Vistas" for a new, New World woman. Whitman advocates:

... women of America, (extricated from ... this fossil and unhealthy air which hangs about the word *lady* ,) develop'd, raised to become the robust equals .. in all departments; or, rather, capable of being so, soon as they ... can bring themselves to give up toys and fictions, and launch forth, as men do, amid real, independent, stormy life.

(p. 37)

Curiosity, courage, ambition, scorn for the soft protected life - "you can't live on puff pastry" (p. 167) - Janet has all the qualities that the typical heroine of Victorian romantic fiction has not.<sup>17</sup> Baughan sees these as the qualities of her new woman - the female equivalent of Thor Rayden, broken free from the restrictive templates of custom. She believed that "the cause of women in public life would always be retarded till they placed sponge cakes and pavlovas more in total perspective to other ideals".<sup>18</sup>

Several other new aspects of Baughan's work, such as her juxtaposition of picturesque and squalid images, are more effectively demonstrated in comparison with examples from the writings of her contemporaries and of the generation to follow. They will be considered in the conclusion where Baughan's proposed status as a New World-oriented inchoate "modern" poet, rather than a "colonial" one, will be gauged against this literary background.

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## Notes.

<sup>1</sup>"The Paddock" covers sixty-nine pages - nearly two-thousand lines.

<sup>2</sup>P. C. M. Alcock, *Landfall*, June 1972, p. 173.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.170.

<sup>4</sup>For instance, in Whitman's "Song of Myself":

The moth and the fish eggs are in their place,  
The suns I see and suns I cannot see are in their place,  
The palpable is in its place and the impalpable is in its place.

(*Poetry and Prose*, p. 27).

Emerson, in "Self Reliance" writes, "Accept the place the divine providence has found for you" (*Essays*, p. 260). Carlyle writes, "our works are the mirror wherein the spirit first sees its natural lineaments" (*Sartor*, p.124).

<sup>5</sup>*Sesame and Lilies* (London: George Allen, 1907) pp. 87-143. His paragon, like Elizabeth, knows her "place". She "sees the quality of things, their claims, and their places". And she must be "enduringly, incorruptibly good". Baughan, too (perhaps deliberately), uses the garden metaphor: Elizabeth, the archetypal mother/protector sees her hearth and home as:

The far richer garden-ground,  
Tasking with delicious toil;-  
Priceless bodies to keep sound,  
Hearts to fence from hurt or harm  
Opening minds from blight or soil.

(pp. 147-48)

And again, like Ruskin, Baughan presents her paragon as a queen in her own domain: "Nay, am I not a Queen,/Throned amid my world of love?/Monarch, servant, mother . . ." (p. 148).

<sup>6</sup>*Two New Zealand Roses*, p. 296.

<sup>7</sup>We may note a similar conciliation between the Old World and the new in her essay "Akaroa", written during the First World War: "The very leaves of the [oak] trees, again - do they not build a perennial bridge between the Old World and the new - Ah! so, alas! of late, have human lives!" (*Glimpses of New Zealand Scenery*, p. 320).

<sup>8</sup>"Song of Myself", *Poetry and Prose*, p.32.

<sup>9</sup>"Carlyle from the American Point of View", *Specimen Days, Poetry and Prose*, p. 890.

<sup>10</sup>Asselineau discusses Whitman's reaction to Kant's differentiation between the "thing-in-itself and one's conception of it in "The Implicit Metaphysics", Chapter 2, *The Evolution of Walt Whitman*, pp. 21-77.

<sup>11</sup>"The Over-Soul", *Essays*, p. 159.

<sup>12</sup>Will Durant summarizes Hegel's point: "... as unity is the goal of development, order is the first requisite of liberty", "Hegel", op. cit, p. 324.

<sup>13</sup>Asselineau, op. cit., pp. 56-9.

<sup>14</sup>*Specimen Days, Poetry and Prose*, p.896.

<sup>15</sup>P.C.M. Alcock says "It resembles nothing so much as a cantata or an oratorio"(*Landfall*, op. cit., p. 173) - and it does, in so far as there is a complex orchestration of solo, duo and multi-voiced parts - but this takes no account of the theatrical requirements of the work: basic stage instructions are given, and a few simple props are indicated, for example, "Enter Elizabeth and Janet, carrying food" (p.198).

<sup>16</sup>For instance, his "to fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sere" may have suggested her line from the Ti's song, "For my drooping ribbons are split and sere . . . Down, O Earth, this log of length/Draw" (p. 201). Jonson's quotation is from "The Noble Nature", in "To the Immortal Memory and Friendship of that Noble Pair, Sir Lucius Cary and Sir Henry Morison" (III i), *The New Oxford Book of English Verse* Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1972, p. 209.

<sup>17</sup>Baughan suggests the required attributes in her description of her character Eva, in "The Mountain Track":

Tenderness, sweetness, grace - these were the qualities she possessed in over-flowing measure; but the pioneer woman has need too, of some of the manlier virtues, and of these poor Eva had not a trace. She was clinging, instead of self-reliant; she had daintiness and delicacy, but no capability; both in frame and nature she was only slender where her need was to be sturdy. Her very gifts were her hindrances in this new way of life.

(*Brown Bread*, p. 171)

<sup>18</sup>Berta S. Burns, "Notes", p. 24.



## CONCLUSION.

Endnotes (p. 232).

This thesis has attempted, via a documented account of Baughan's major poems, to re-assess her as a nascent "modern" rather than a colonial poet. As throughout the thesis, by "modern", I mean modern for her time. Baughan's modernism embraces a national consciousness demonstrated in her attempts to relate language and style to their time and place. Although some of her innovations are similar to those usually associated with the Modernists, Baughan came by quite a different route from that taken by contributors to the Modernist movement, who, of course, were strongly influenced by the French Symbolists and by such seminal works as Arthur Symonds' *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, Aldington's translation of *The Golden Asse* and James Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, and who, in any case, were to eschew the notion of poetry as a vehicle, which Baughan retained.

The thesis has attempted, as well, to demonstrate the significance of her transcendentalism, and of her freedom from "Anglophilia" in generating the "modern" aspects in her work.

An explanation of the factors involved in Baughan's "modernism" required the inclusion of several related themes: her background; her mysticism; the literary influences - especially of the American Transcendentalists - on her work; and, finally, her transformation of transcendentalist concepts to literary innovation. The close interweaving of these four themes becomes obvious in the study of her allegorical poems. To make this point, I will briefly review the inter-dependence of these themes in "Shingle-Short".

For instance, I noted in "Shingle-Short" that the poem's dominant symbol, the boat, a rough, home-made affair, was both a symbol for Baughan's *literary* agenda: that poetry can be made from local, even crude ingredients, and, equally, for an important *transcendentalist* concept: the notion that the ordinary, even flawed, object can lead directly to a perception of the Divine: "Wreck, you've a-sailed me home to God" (p. 39). I remarked on the biographical, transcendentalist and literary connotations of her persona who achieves visionary insight, thereby seeing himself as but a part of a Whole, and who sees his role as a creator, and as changer of the status quo: "To heave an' haul things different" (p. 21). A similar fusion of biographical, literary and transcendentalist concepts was encountered in the allegories to follow.

Baughan's mysticism was one of the two factors that set her apart from her colonial contemporaries; the other was her extraordinary background. The "tragic happenings" that blighted her childhood, and the appalling circumstances she encountered working in the East London slums, made it impossible for her to retain a sentimental attachment to England. Baughan's tendency to mysticism, her classical education and her interest in social reform, provided the pre-conditions necessary for a close empathy with the writings of the New England Transcendentalists.

Baughan's early acquaintance with Carlyle's work was probably her direct route to Emerson and Whitman, and to Hegel-biased philosophers such as Josiah Royce. Ideas emphasized by these writers are absorbed into her allegorical poems. She makes use of them in two ways. She uses them as mandates for her literary agenda: "new sights to new sight, a new world to new eyes", and she converts them to literary innovation: "to discoverers, discoveries!".

The "modern" elements in her work can be seen partly as a response to challenges inherent in transcendentalist writing. Royce's demand for "facts in their naked commonplace reality" may be seen as the philosophical underpinning for the new realism of her metaphors. Emerson's demand for plain "*American facts*" in new American literature offers literary sanction for Baughan's inclusion of unadorned *New Zealand* facts in new New Zealand literature. Her interest in perception and point-of view may be seen as an exploration of Emerson's question, "What is life but the angle of vision?"<sup>1</sup> Whitman's call for a poetic attuned to "the rude rank spirit of the democracies" provides a mandate for her attempt to convey the country's "rough and raw aspect" in the language and style of the poems.

Baughan's attempt to grapple with the concepts of perception, illusion and disillusion is not a surprising development in one who considered that, via her transcendentalist insight, she had "*gained a new world, because a new view of the world*". Either directly from the German idealists, or indirectly through the transcendentalists, Baughan takes up and makes literary use of the idea of the subjectivity of perception. Carlyle, we remember, made Fichte's emphasis on the difference between Appearance and Essence the underpinning concept of *Sartor Resartus*.

Baughan's transcendentalist perspective may be seen as contributing also to her localism. Because perception was seen as inescapably subjective, a transcendentalist could say "*here is where I am.*". Baughan's "*here*" is emphatically New Zealand. We noted her insistence on the "*here*" of Thor Rayden's field of creative effort: he is "*Here, to this rough and raw prospect, these backblocks of Being, assigned*". The idea that "*Here is where we are*" - where we are, that is, both in geographical location and in stage of

development - has obvious relevance to an indigenous literature. Indeed it is a point still being made by our current writers.<sup>2</sup>

Baughan's localism, and its transcendentalist connection, is demonstrated in her apparent absorption of dominant transcendentalist metaphors into a local form of expression. We may recall, for instance, that Baughan's naive colonial roughly paraphrases an idea common to idealists and succinctly compressed in Schiller's maxim, "The universe is God's thought expressed". Shingle-Short sees the world as God's "turn-out". He explains the universe as "God's big Thought come pat". And he comes to see imperfection in creation as therefore *intended*: The implication for an indigenous colonial poetic is important. Imperfection is acceptable, Colonial gaucheries are admissible, even appropriate - *for their time and place*. Baughan appears to make literary capital of something akin to the Hegelian notion that "every condition though destined to disappear, has the divine right that belongs to it *as a necessary stage in evolution*". Consistent with this belief, she is able to accept whole-heartedly the rough and raw aspects of New Zealand at the turn of the century as *right for their time* - as she conveys in Shingle-Short's analogy, "Scaffoldin' - kind o' Right just now,/But clean Right's what it's comin' to!" They are right for their time, right for their place, and therefore right for an indigenous poetic.

This is precisely what poets and versifiers among her predecessors, her contemporaries, and those who immediately followed, were unable to grasp. They felt the need to sweep under the carpet the culturally uncouth and perhaps socially gauche aspects of the colony - at least as far as poetry was concerned.<sup>3</sup> Hence we are left with a body of work that has been described as "shapely, pleasant, empty".<sup>4</sup> Even among the talkers of, dreamers of, a

"national literature", Anglophilia stood in the way of clear vision. But Baughan, in her own words, "went native".

Anglophilia was a triple handicap to the poets and would-be poets of Baughan's generation. In the first place, it resulted in a dichotomy of purpose for those whose intention was to attempt an indigenous poetic. The problem is obvious, for instance, in W. P. Reeves' "A Colonist in his Garden".<sup>5</sup> On the one hand his speaker insists on allegiance to the colony: "Here am I rooted. / Firm and fast / We men take root who face the blast/ . . . Fight Nature for a home". On the other hand (and in the same poem) he admits, "Yet that my heart to England cleaves/ This garden tells with blooms and leaves/ In old familiar throng". In a similar vein is J. C. Andersen's sentiment in "Home Echoes", "And whilst we can discern / The new is beautiful, cannot withhold/ Our sad interpretation thro' the old".<sup>6</sup> Baughan, in contrast, seems determined to eliminate such evidence of the "colonial cringe" from her allegories. In "A Bush Section" she reverses colonial hankerings for aristocratic European connections, by making Thor Rayden's "long line of nobles" decidedly ignoble. He is "son of a drunkard". She questions unthinking acceptance of inherited notions when her narrator in "Maui's Fish" asks, "They are old, are they therefore so wise?" And she sets Anglophilia on its head when she envisages the colony, in the guise of Maui's Te Ika, cheekily pointing to the future, and beckoning the Old World to follow.

Secondly, Anglophilia was a handicap, obviously, in that it encouraged the retention of English poetic diction. Frequently, in the "poetry" of Baughan's colonial/Edwardian contemporaries (and occasionally in her own), artificial and irrelevant diction expressed artificial and fanciful images. The very titles of some of the books being produced around the turn of the

century, in the name of a "national literature", contradict their authors' intentions. One could cite Maud Peacocke's *Songs of the Happy Isles* (Christchurch Melbourne and London: Whitcombe and Tombs, (1910), or Mary Colborne-Veel's *The Fairest of the Angels, and Other Verse* (London: Horace Cox, 1894), M.A. Sinclair's *The Huia's Homeland and Other Verses* (London: Eliot Stock, 1897), Thomas Bracken's *Lays of the Land of the Maori and Moa*. (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1884), and so on. Baughan's unsentimental title, *Shingle-Short*, borrowed from Australasian slang, suggests an intention to dispense with such whimsy.

The third major weakness associated with Anglophilia in colonial/Edwardian poetry was the failure of literary Anglophiles to depict landscape in a way relevant to its generally accepted role. Alexander Bathgate, to quote an extreme example, asks of the New Zealand colonial landscape, "Why have we in these isles no fairy dell,/No haunted wood, nor wild enchanted mere?".<sup>7</sup> There can be little doubt that our European ancestors saw the native rain forest as an impediment to land development. Samuel Butler was probably quite right in his observation, "A mountain here is only beautiful if it has good grass on it . . . If it is good for sheep, it is beautiful, magnificent, and all the rest of it; if not, it is not worth looking at".<sup>8</sup> Yet such an attitude is not reflected in colonial/Edwardian poetry until Baughan's "Green Bush to the Moa, Burnt Bush to the resolute Settler!" in "A Bush Section", or her cheerful "Old trees, but new timber" in "Burnt Bush". Her contemporary, Dora Wilcox, for instance, ends her poem "Ode to the Forest" with a doleful vision of the "Ghosts of Earth and Air" "Moaning a requiem, in their utter desolation, /For old worlds passing by".<sup>9</sup> Reeves in "The passing of the Forest" deplores "The ruined beauty wasted in a night", and Satchell, in "Ode to the Vanishing Forest", regrets the loss of "the wood

nymph's voice" and despairs of his species "whose ruining hand must break the things we prize" (*Patriotic and Other Poems*, p. 54).

In a number of areas Baughan's New World-oriented liberalism contrasts with the usually conservative, sometimes reactionary, attitudes of her literary colleagues. In the matter of woman's place, for instance, Colonial/Edwardian literature tended to reproduce the traditional extremes - woman as Eve, the cause of man's downfall, or woman as God's gift to man. Baughan's contemporary versifier, John Liddell Kelly, presents the former view:

New Woman - Bah! Her ways are as old as Eve's -  
She trusts the guide who flatters and deceives;  
But now, Man shares not in her fall, nor weaves,  
To hide her shame, a robe of forest leaves!<sup>10</sup>

In "Woman's Rights", Thomas Bracken presents the latter :

... Her right is to bring  
The garnered fruits of happiness  
To cheer man's dreary way,  
To smooth his rougher nature,  
And refine his coarser clay. <sup>11</sup>

A more balanced view on the subject is offered by Arthur Adams in his poem "The New Woman". Adams concludes with the sentiment that although "in the wrestle of the world she shall lose/Her dimpled prettiness, her petals bruise", yet, "moulding ever to a a truer type/She shall return to man, no more abased - /His counterpart, a woman, rounded, ripe" (*Maoriland and Other Verses*, op. cit.), p.70. Not surprisingly, feminist Baughan proposes a New Woman who does not need to define her position in relation to the

male of the species. Her colonial prototype, Janet, wants to be a maker/creator in her own right, to "Make something that is Something" (p. 163).

Baughan was aware that the way of saying, as well as the way of seeing, needed a radical overhaul. Although she wrote no poetry manifesto, as such, she leaves us in little doubt about her view of what was wrong with then-contemporary verse. Her status as a *conscious* literary innovator is suggested not only by her "modernism" at a textual level, which we shall consider presently, but also by her presentation in all the allegories, of a persona/protagonist with a mission to usher in the new, to make changes. Thus Baughan, alias Shingle-Short, sees her job "To Make" and to "heave an' haul things different". Baughan, alias Thor Rayden, sees herself as "Creator" and "Changer". As the anonymous speaker of "Burnt Bush" she rejoices in the transition of "Old trees" to "new timber". Alias Maui she is described as a "bold fisher", one who "went forth" and "experimented", and as one, emphatically, not interested in "fish very long caught", but only in the *living* catch. As Janet, she longs to exchange the "puff-pastry" stereotyped female role for "Something to grab, and grip and grapple with", and to take "the first step/Beyond [the Paddock's] fence" (p. 173).

Such a role (of a conscious literary innovator) is currently credited to the twenties and thirties generation of poets.<sup>12</sup> Much has been made, for instance, of Rex Fairburn's "Rhyme of the Dead Self", (*He Shall Not Rise*, London: Columbia Press ) and especially of his lines, "Tonight I have taken all that I was/and strangled him that pale lily-white lad", suggesting a symbolic slaying of Georgian imagery and cadences. That was in 1930. Baughan, via *Shingle-Short*, was calling for an end to the Anglophile, imitative work of her contemporaries ("Their contrack's labelled 'As Before'") soon after the turn of the century.



Baughan, I suggested, could be viewed in some ways as a Cresswell of the early 1900s. A similarity exists both in the uneven quality of their work, and in their strong sense of a need for an indigenous poetic. A difference exists in the degree to which their outlooks helped or hindered their poetic aim.

Cresswell, we recall, wrote in *The Poet's Progress* (1930) of his "design of founding [his] poetry on the traditions, customs, and scenery of [his] native land". And, as we have seen, he suggests tentatively in the introduction to his first collection, *Poems* (1928), a similar belief to that confidently declared by de Montalk in the foreword to *Surprising Songs* (1930), namely that here in the antipodes poetry could happen, and that the colony's barbarous landscape might well be an important influence on that poetry. We have seen that Baughan made this point (in 1908) in "Shingle-Short". The literary message to be taken from Baughan's poem is that poetry can indeed be made here in New Zealand, and from *local* materials, too. If the resultant creation appears somewhat crude and unpolished, then that is an authentic aspect of its character. But Cresswell, like de Montalk, remained too hopelessly Anglophile to make the essential shift from hierarchic to demotic, or to shake off the strictures of inherited form. Indeed Cresswell stoutly defended both his Anglophilism and his retention of literary conventions. In *Present without Leave* (London: Cassell, 1939, p. 42), he wrote, "I thought of . . . the discomfort through which I must pass to reach England again, to do which I would have undergone any hardship I think, so much is that country's approval the only aim and reward of any achievement in this world". In the same volume, as we have seen, Cresswell proclaimed with imperious aplomb that "at this adult stage of our language there can be no new forms . . ." Nor did he repent. In the foreword to his last published poem, *The Voyage of the Hurunui* (Christchurch, Caxton Press, 1956), he disarmed his critics in

advance: "As for the style of the poem, the many rhymes and incessant metres, the evident echoes and archaisms, I am heartily glad of them".

Cresswell's attitudes, as much as his style and archaic imagery, ensured that his hopeful intimations of something new in New Zealand verse did not translate to innovation in his poetic text. Baughan's guiding New World star pointed to a gospel of change, of democracy, of female emancipation and of the advantages of modern science. Cresswell clung to his reactionary world view. His blatant misogyny fits oddly with his stated aim of founding a poetry on the "traditions and customs" of New Zealand. In both poetry and prose Cresswell deplored material progress, modern science and the Modernist poets. Equally at odds with incoming liberal New World sensibilities was de Montalk's penchant for an elitist, anti-democratic clique of poet "princes". Baughan made a point of debunking just such an attitude in "A Bush Section", where she has her high-born new colonial boy soil his lily-white hands in a round of mundane farm chores.

Despite all the theory, it was Mason who was the first of their generation to actually present something new in a published poem. Notwithstanding the obvious influence of English and classical writing on his work, his stark, spare, sour poems looked new and original in the context of New Zealand writing. In some aspects, however, they were not quite new. Contributing to the impression of newness in Mason's early poems, was his bleak, totally unsentimental vision of humanity helpless in a meaningless universe. Mason may have been inspired by classical writing, or Great Depression blues, but he struck perfectly the Modernist mood of cynicism, and in his laconic presentation, was attuned to its fashion of concise expression. It was an effective antidote to Georgian mawkishness. Baughan only intermittently achieves terse expression, but, like Mason, she presents a new vision of

humanity - new in 1908 New Zealand verse - in her abandonment of the Christian dogma and iconography that underpins religious verse of the era - locally, that of Mary Richmond, for example<sup>13</sup>, or Dugald Ferguson<sup>14</sup>, or, on a much larger scale, in England, of G. M. Hopkins, Christina Rossetti, Francis Thompson, Coventry Patmore, Alice Meynell, and others. Baughan, we have seen, substitutes an holistic creative spirit bent on its own perfection, at the expense, where necessary, of any of its component parts, including humanity. From a traditional, human-centred viewpoint (although not from a transcendentalist's), her vision of humanity at the mercy of a fickle-seeming world spirit, seems hardly more cheering than Mason's "far-pitched perilous hostile place".

In images such as her cannibalistic, "Dumb as heads . . . held fast in the mouth of the oven" (from "Maui's Fish"), or in expressions like "on the booze inside my brain", or "Oh stinkin! Makes you kind o' heave!" (from "Shingle-Short"), Baughan creates a precedent for Mason's whimsy-destroying shock tactics in his grisly early poem "Body of John" (originally untitled) in *The Beggar*, 1924).

Decades before Fairburn decided it was time to strangle "that pale lily-white lad" Baughan had conceived of a would-be colonial creator (Shingle-Short) who saw himself as able to "explore" the "Bush" (the New Zealand literary scene) as a "band-saw", that is, as capable of cutting at a variety of angles, as opposed to the repetitive "plank-cutting" of his unimaginative supervisors (surely, the literary establishment). But, having symbolically cleared away some of the old growth, with what new planting does she replace it?

Baughan's "modernism" shows itself both in new subject-matter and in technical innovation. I will consider the former first. Baughan must be one of the very earliest (New Zealand) experimenters in the "mirror tradition" - with its emphasis in the inner life and perception - which currently cites (in prose fiction) Katherine Mansfield as matriarch, Robin Hyde, Helen Shaw and Russell Haley as continuing the mode, and Janet Frame as its major exponent; and in poetry, Frame again (with her aptly named *The Pocket Mirror*), and Helen Shaw, Michael Harlow, Jan Kemp, Ian Wedde and others.

In "A Bush Section" we noted Baughan's attempt to convey something of the inner life of her protagonist. Thor Rayden had the "Burnt Bush" "within and without" him. The idea of the subjectivity of perception allows a freedom as limitless as the idea of the fictionality of fiction. In "A Bush Section", Baughan creates and dispels moods to illustrate the subjective nature of perception as easily as Janet Frame, alias Violet Pansy Proudlock/Alice Thumb, illustrates the fictionality of fiction by simply erasing her fictional characters with a squirt of 'Blue Fury' bleach.<sup>15</sup> In "Burnt Bush" Baughan uses what Helen Shaw calls "the 'mirror of dream'" to present what seem to be shadowy reflections of her own past. Her verse and prose drama, "The Paddock" is designed to illustrate the "mirror" strain's main concern - the subjectivity of perception.

Baughan's interest in illustrating the mind's contribution to shaping what is seen and how it is seen, has a precedent in Whitman's poetry, for instance, "You objects that call from diffusion my meanings and give them shape"<sup>16</sup>, and a current local parallel in Helen Shaw's similar interest. In "The City of Wonders" (*Out of the Dark*. London: Mitre Press, 1968, p. 10), for instance, Shaw writes:

The memory of nothingness  
 of non-existing  
 is born with us  
 and each mind, its own  
 architect,  
 a mind out of nothingness makes . . . .

Shaw's "each mind its own architect" relates to Janet Frame's lifetime devotion to "the transformation of ordinary facts and ideas into a shining palace of mirrors".<sup>17</sup> And of course a similar idea was to become widely used in Modernist and post-Modernist poetry - in Wallace Stevens' "The Plum", for instance: "The words of things entangle and confuse/The plum survives its poem . . .",<sup>18</sup> or in William Carlos Williams' famous distinction between primary experience and the compulsive interpretation of that experience: "so much depends/upon/a red wheel/barrow/glazed with rain/water/beside the white chickens".

And Baughan opts for the anti-hero as subject in an era when it was still a common practice to devote poems to eminent (mostly English) personages: John Liddell Kelly's "Ode for the Coronation of Edward VII", for example, or Ferguson's "Lord Clyde" or Bracken's "David Livingstone"<sup>19</sup>, or J Giles's apostrophes, "Milton" and "Shelley".<sup>20</sup> Her choice of a simpleton as protagonist for her long title poem seems a deliberate tilt at the mores of "high" literature. She dares to shock Edwardian delicacy, too, with a brief foray into sex imagery. At a time when even her ardently feminist contemporaries, such as the novelist Edith Grossmann, faded out to a row of dots at the vague suggestion of sexual activity, Baughan's inclusion of such phrases as "weighs and presses the undesir'd Dark" ("Burnt Bush") is quite new and daring.

Equally surprising, for their time, are Baughan's innovations in technique, her "new way of saying". Although her experiments at the textual

level appear somewhat spasmodic, and are seldom carried through with any real consistency, she now and then startles with the sharpness of her break with the work being produced by her (New Zealand) contemporaries. At about the same time that Hubert Church was addressing New Zealand:

Isles, had ye been where Greece beheld the morn  
Touch with soft foot the looping Cyclades,  
Ye had been worshipped at Achean hearths<sup>21</sup>

Baughan was depicting a colonial landscape as:

Naked, denuded,  
Forestless, fernless,  
Mute, now, and songless,  
Sharp on sheer sky gape the lips of the gully;

(p. 63).

Now and again a line, a phrase, or an idiom in Baughan's work will seem starkly at odds with its era. Her "Sharp on sheer sky gape the lips of the gully" transmits the "shock of the new" to New Zealand colonial/Edwardian poetry - as startling, in that limited context, as T. S. Eliot's evening "spread out against the sky/Like a patient etherized upon a table"<sup>22</sup> in the weighty context of English poetry of the nineteen-twenties. In presenting the barren hills as a gape-mouthed corpse, Baughan subverts expectations of the "picturesque" or "poetic" image and intuitively (or stumbles upon) the Modernists' and Postmodernists' propensity for the ugly image. Such of her lines as, "From bubbling ooze the mud-crabs sidle out" would not seem out of place in Eliot's *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, alongside his "I should have been a pair of ragged claws/Scuttling across the floors of silent seas". Similar tactics are employed by the current crop of New Zealand Postmodernists. There can be few more repulsively riveting opening lines than Janet Charman's:

she holds  
 the big dumb placental meat  
 cupping the liver grain tissues  
 to see if they're complete.<sup>23</sup>

And surely some of the most surprising lines in New Zealand's early twentieth century poetry are Baughan's:

Fern of the forest, alley's breath,  
 Kiss of a lover, rattle of Death,  
 Bell-bird's music, and drunken brawl . . .

(p. 177)

Up till this point, bellbirds in colonial verse have sung with dreary predictability from their ubiquitous kowhai trees. Here is a colonial poet who has not only debunked that cliché, but has realized the efficacy of juxtaposing the picturesque and the squalid. Here, too, Baughan anticipates a device much favoured by the Moderns - one thinks of Eliot's typist's "drying combinations touched by the sun's last rays" (*The Waste Land* III), or T. E. Hulme's lark that "crawls on the cloud/like a flea on a white body"<sup>24</sup> - or closer to home, and current, Keri Hulme's "I am a map of Orion scattered in moles across this/firmament of Body".<sup>25</sup> Mason realized the power of the ugly image some fifteen years after Baughan's tentative experiments with the device. In 1926, two years after Mason's ghoulish "Body of John", young Rex Fairburn was able to advise de Montalk:

. . . you must widen your concept of Beauty. Beauty is just as much to be found (by the searcher) in a dead rat in a gutter or a drunken prostitute as in the orthodox lovely things. <sup>26</sup>

(Trussell, *Fairburn*, p. 66).

Baughan, before 1908, was making tentative steps towards the incoming new sardonic tone in, for instance, her deliberate mismatch of metre and image in her cheerfully rollicking "Song of the Wind" (p. 175):

And the floor we beat with our frolicking feet  
     was, the batter'd face of the Dead.  
 (Sow, reap!  
 Slaughter, and Sleep!  
 I danced, and away I fled.

Not till the next generation of poets - and, in New Zealand, most notably in the hands of Denis Glover - was the hard-hitting ditty an effective tool:

Elizabeth is dead now (its years ago)  
 Old Tom went light in the head  
 And quardle oodle ardle wardle doodle  
 The magpies said.<sup>27</sup>

And of course, it continued to be effectively used by avant-garde poets generally. One thinks of Roger McGough's neurological experts

With kind blueeyes [sic.]  
 And gentle voices  
 Small white hands  
 And large Rolls Royces.<sup>28</sup>

I mentioned Baughan's technique of attributing to her subject its opposite and unnatural quality - her "currents stay'd" or "terrible Sunlight", for example. In this too, she goes with the flow from Edwardian decorum towards the new shock-tactics of subverting expected connotations. The great moderns were to popularize the device. One is reminded of Eliot's nightingale singing "jug-jug to dirty ears" ("A Game of Chess", *The Waste Land*, II), or Ezra Pound's "laughter out of dead bellies" ("Hugh Selwyn Mauberley", IV), or, on a local scale, of Janet Frame's "invalid sun": "and the



invalid sun opened in the sky, erupting its contagious boils of light"<sup>29</sup> - or for a more recent example, Alan Brunton's "rheumatic world".<sup>30</sup>

Another innovation in Baughan's work is the domestic metaphor. Since there appears to be no genesis for this phenomenon in other colonial writing, it may be viewed as a conscious attempt at originality. We first noted her facility for the device in *Reuben*, where, for instance, she says of her elderly but able-bodied rustic, "He was not yet Memory's poor stay-at-home, upon the Past/Feeding a faint life". There are many examples elsewhere in her work,<sup>31</sup> but to mention some examples from the allegories: in "A Bush Section", the creek is "busy and bright as a needle in knitting/Running in, running out, running over and under" (p. 81); in "Maui's Fish", "and his tongue was of oil, and his words as a feast in the cooking" (p. 48); in "The Paddock" for homebody Elizabeth "Washday's a glorious Waterloo". Hine laments, "a taha fill'd, is it not full?/A web woven, is there no rest?" (p. 195). And in "The Song of the Ti", the Ti tree rejoices, "Humbly house-keeping my root/Did the Paddock soil transmute" (p 203). Amongst current writers, perhaps Maurice Gee currently makes most effective use of the domestic metaphor in his novel *Meg* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), for instance.<sup>32</sup>

Baughan's progression in the direction of "modernism" is indicated, too, by her movement towards open form. I will define "open form", since the expression has several interpretations. It can mean the avoidance of the traditional closing-off of the end of a poem. The early poems of Glover, for instance, close off in the traditional way. In "Arawata Bill" Glover conjures up visions of Victorian underliners of morals when he closes off with "R.I.P. where no gold lies/ . . . You should have been told/Only in you was the gold". Most of Baughan's poems come to a definite conclusion, like Glover's above, but there are instances where she avoids "letting [the] gate clang shut on the

imagination of the reader", to use C. K. Stead's expression.<sup>33</sup> In "A Bush Section", for example, she resists the Victorian writers' propensity to underline the moral, and lets the reader answer for him/herself the rhetorical questions that persist throughout the poem. In "The Paddock", it is left to the reader to reconcile the disparate points of view suggested.

But "open form" can be broadened to mean an openness of sentiment, as Stead seems to suggest in his essay "From Wystan to Carlos" (1979). Within some of Baughan's poems themselves, there is a smudging of the edges between self-conscious literature and life - or, as Stead puts it, an attempt to "dissolve poetry into life":

Far from wanting to be an aesthete who wants to separate literature from life, the Modernist poet, the 'open form' poet, wants literature to invade, to absorb life, almost to become indistinguishable from it, to collapse conceptual distinctions.

*(In The Glass Case, p.148).*

One may perceive some collapsing of conceptual distinctions for instance in those passages of Janet's monologue suggestive of impromptu musings where poetry looks much like prose and escapes the expected restraints of "finished" work by means of disjointed commentary, colloquial speech, and decidedly "un-polished" demotic imagery: "What is living?/ Eating up sheep and wearing out your socks?":

To-morrow? Same old sorrow!  
Cook, clean - the same tame humdrum . . . I forgot -  
Churning's thrown in - it's Friday.  
Every Friday  
These last four years . . . (Let's see, I'd just left  
school  
When 'Lisbeth sent for me . . . .

*("The Paddock", p. 162).*

It seems an intuitive stab at a "modern" style of prose/poetry, blurring conscious divisions between literature and life, that was to come close to perfection decades later in Wedde's, *Georgicon*; for instance:

Visiting in these city suburb streets  
 what makes you angry  
     is that during an evening so hot  
                     nobody could speak, you  
                     were too stupid to take the chairs  
                     & the wine  
                     out into the cool on the footpath: that was  
                     something  
                     people always did  
                     'somewhere else'.

("heavy breathing", *Georgicon* (Wellington:Victoria University Press, 1984, p. 11).

Baughan's "open form" appears "modern" for its time in the feeling she can transmit (in "A Bush Section", for instance), of sheer momentum conveyed in an almost breathless rush of ideas that tumble down the page, giving an impression of on-the-spot creation. Thus Baughan exhibits a characteristic that Stead notes in James K. Baxter's later sonnet sequences, on which he comments. " . . . [a] characteristic they have at least in common with Modernism, if not derived from it directly: that is the forward movement, the sense of a momentum of expression, is more important than the '*mot juste*', or the polished phrase, or the brilliant image".<sup>34</sup>

Baughan's struggle to shake off the tyranny of form was consciously undertaken. It is interesting to compare her comments on the attempt with similar comments on the same problem by a present-day practitioner, Fleur Adcock, who prefaces her poems in Doyle's anthology with the note:

One of my chief difficulties in writing verse is the problem of form: not of achieving it, but of preventing myself from being undone by it. Time and again I find that a poem which began with some phrase or image that casually presented itself to me, and continued innocently enough for a few lines, has furtively insinuated itself into some conventional or otherwise strict form; I am suddenly saddled with a rhyme-scheme . . . .<sup>35</sup>

She had an early precedent in Baughan:

About the 'artificial' forms of verse - I once tried a daily ballade, but that's all - I love not the form that keeps so continually demanding attention. Even a sonnet is apt to trouble my ear in the 5th line - I always smell the necessity of the rhyme & it makes me feel inclined to snort and say 'Pooh, you affected thing!'<sup>36</sup>

Their personal solution to the problem, too, is similar, and "modern", since it involves (in Adcock's case), reconstituting the offending verse in the unaffected natural speech rhythms of prose. Baughan sometimes worked from a prose version first, and then attempted to "work on it in verse".<sup>37</sup> We may remember that Baughan's smudging of the division between poetry and prose was sufficiently daring for its time to earn her a rap over the knuckles from a critic for allowing her poetry to "run half-way - more than half-way . . . to prose", which he considered "neither flesh nor fish".

Baughan's poetry gives a "modern" impression too, in its occasional subversion of traditional syntax. Again, her "newness" is highlighted by the consternation of her contemporary critics. We may remember that such of her lines as, "knock'd at the gates of my sense, but not enter'd", or, "They murmur admiring, in envy they muse, and amazement," or "A dead fish he did not receive it?" evoked the comment, "Some of the lines seem more like a literal translation from a foreign language".<sup>38</sup>

Other "modern" devices noted in her work are her disruptive tactics, foiling predictable rhythm with an unexpected syllable or with an unwieldy word and her deliberate choice, occasionally, of a patently "incorrect" one (such as "flocking" of fish). "New" too, for its time, was her re-introduction of medieval alliterative metre - or more frequently, variations of the original, giving rise to effects reminiscent of Hopkins' "sprung rhythm".

However, despite Baughan's movement in the direction of "modernism" she remained in some ways, of course, very much a writer of her times: her long-windedness, the sheer length of her best pieces and the moral tone that underlies them are exactly what one would expect of a writer brought up on Tennyson and those morality-conscious purveyors of inflated rhetoric, Ruskin and Carlyle. Her verbosity and enthusiasm are at odds with the coming trend towards a more concise, precise and cynical poetic. Nevertheless, on those occasions when she abandons her characteristic penchant for the high-flown phrase, she reveals a capacity to render particulars exactly, an almost Imagist precision. One feels she is on the scent of Modernism when she writes such lines as, "The world sits in the Paddock, and all's well!/Eggs are Americas! and milking means/Commerce!" And she is at least modern for her time when she opts for the decidedly demotic, as when Shingle-Short expresses his elation in his indigenous creation: "It's done! I done it! an' it's done!" (p. 21). Although Baughan's concept of poetry as a medium for a message conflicts with the Modernists' understanding of the poem as imaginative act, on occasion she manages to fuse style and message - in the opening verse paragraph of "A Bush Section", for instance, style *is* message, for there the rough and raw state of the colony is expressed in harsh consonant sounds, verbs connoting severe discomfort, and shambling rhythms. Similarly, the sustained mood of surprise and delight

that accompanies the arrival of the new land in "Maui's Fish", conveys transcendentalist ecstasy.

In some ways Baughan may be seen as a "Georgian" in the Edwardian era. In her reformist zeal she has much in common with leading New Zealand poets of the twenties, thirties and forties. Stead writes of the poetry of this time, "The public themes were not simply political as they tended to be in Britain; they were broadened to express a regional awareness and a national consciousness".<sup>39</sup> Baughan had concerned herself with such themes a generation earlier.

With her small incursions into "modernism" and her retention of much that is not new, Baughan is a bridge-figure in New Zealand literary history. She is not easily classified. She resists classification in a tradition that highlights a sense of isolation and spiritual exile in its colonial and post-colonial writers.<sup>40</sup> The received literary attitude to colonial isolation simply does not apply to one who is able to claim a transcendentalist's consciousness of the *animate* nature of all things so that to her, *"the universe is nowhere dead matter, but everywhere alive and active, bright Spirit throughout"* (my emphasis).<sup>41</sup> A point made earlier needs to be emphasized, namely, that Baughan's transcendentalist perspective not only removes London from the centre of her (cultural) universe; it removes humanity itself from necessarily occupying centre stage, for the soul of the Whole inhabits all forms - in her words, "What, must flesh and blood/be soul's one vesture? who would have it so/Not yet hath understood!" Such a view is plainly incompatible with the usually promoted one, which assumes in colonial and early dominion poets a conventional human-centred perspective, giving rise to a melancholy hankering for the cultural advantages of Europe. To the transcendentalist, "here" is where *I am*. Thus Baughan, unlike (early) Curnow and those of his

persuasion, did not have to sigh in vain for some "marvellous year" to "learn the trick of standing upright here".<sup>42</sup> For that reason she is able to reach beyond the Anglo-oriented poets who can be made to fit Curnow's theory of colonial dislocation, and to connect, in spirit at least, with Louis Johnson, and his circle, including Baxter and Alistair Campbell, who scoffed at the notion of an allegedly inevitable colonial melancholia.

So where does that leave Baughan ? Curnow called "A Bush Section" "the best poem before Mason", and having surveyed the field, I consider the claim is justified. Baughan achieves writing of quality on occasion, but her inclusion also of a good deal that is mediocre, assigns her to the status of a minor New Zealand poet. Her status as a literary historical figure, however, is another matter. Baughan's originality, her intuition of the new path poetry was beginning to take, and her self-consciousness as a direction-pointer for an indigenous poetic are of importance in the historical overview which must concern itself with the chronological order of individual contributions to the making a national literature. These factors mark her *Shingle-Short* volume as a significant watershed. Behind it lies the considerable bulk of effete and static colonial/Edwardian verse. Within the pages of *Shingle-Short* we may observe a distinctive New World consciousness, an antipodean orientation, and a surprising "modernism", giving practical expression to her characteristic phrase, "New times, new solutions!".

Baughan had no serious competition for a claim to an original voice among her contemporaries. And it was to be sixteen years before such a voice was heard. Despite the hopeful proclamations by Cresswell and de Montalk of a new, indigenous voice in New Zealand poetry, there appears, after Baughan's 1908 collection, to be no clearly original poetry till Mason's *The Beggar* of 1924. A considerable amount has been written about the awareness

of national identity of the "significant" 1920s generation of poets, and of their questioning of the assumptions of their society and of its prevailing poetic. Well noted, too, are the "first" signs of a new way of saying, of "modernism", in some of their work. These important changes are seen, in received literary history, to have occurred between 1924 and the early 1930s.<sup>43</sup>

My suggestion that "modernism" in New Zealand writing actually begins with Baughan rests on the evidence in her texts that these changes had already occurred (at least intermittently) by 1908. Two factors - her freedom from "Anglophilia" and her transference of literary allegiance to the New World - seem crucial to her role as innovator. Whitman, I have emphasised, advocated a New World poetic attuned to the "rude rank spirit of the democracies". Baughan obliges, and thereby finds her route to "modernism". I suggest that a reassessment and refinement of our perception of Baughan is called for, one that sees her as a nascent "modern", rather than a "colonial" poet, and, as such, the earliest in New Zealand.



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<sup>1</sup> *The Reign of Wonder*, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup>Patricia Grace entitled a recent Television documentary (T.V.N.Z., 7/7/91) : "Here is Where We Are". In it she cites her grasping of this fact as the key to development where her own work is concerned. "Here is where *you* are" is the point she repeatedly makes to potential writers among the classes she addresses. Another point made frequently by Baughan, and in the documentary referred to, by Patricia Grace, is the importance of a *living* literature. Grace named two impediments, in her New Zealand education, to her understanding of the idea of an indigenous literature. One was that the books she and her contemporaries were given to read were written by people from other countries. The other was that they had been written by people long since *dead* in other countries.

<sup>3</sup>As late as 1960, Curnow was expressing regret for what he saw as a mistake among the younger poets of his generation, namely, that they appeared to be under the illusion that they could escape "from the pangs and clumsiness of what Santayana would call our second body, our country" (Introduction, *The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse*), p. 66.

<sup>4</sup>J.C. Reid in G. A. Wilkes and J. C. Reid, *The Literatures of Australia and New Zealand* Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1970, p. 169.

<sup>5</sup>*New Zealand Verse*, op. cit., p 24.

<sup>6</sup>*Songs Unsung*, Christchurch: Whitcome and Tombs 1903, p.2.

<sup>7</sup>"Faerie", reprinted in *New Zealand Verse*, p. 188, from *Far South Fancies*, London: Griffith, Farran, Okenden and Welsh [1899].

<sup>8</sup>In *A First Year in Canterbury Settlement*, London : Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts and Green, 1863, pp. 70-1.

<sup>9</sup>*Verses from Maoriland*, London: George Allen, 1905, p. 11.

<sup>10</sup>"Quatrains", *Heather and Fern: Songs of Scotland and Maoriland*, Wellington: New Zealand Times Company, p. 58.

<sup>11</sup>*Musings in Maoriland* , op. cit., p. 99.

<sup>12</sup>I do not count the small band of enthusiasts for a "National Literature" lead by W. P. Reeves, Jessie M and William Satchell, in the 1890s. It is generally acknowledged that their poetry showed no convincing of originality to back up their aims.

<sup>13</sup>*Poems* London: Elkin Matthews, 1903.

<sup>14</sup>*Job and Other Sacred Poems*, Dunedin: James Horsburgh, 1898.

<sup>15</sup>In *Living in the Maniototo*, Auckland: Hutchinson Group (N Z) Limited, 1981.

<sup>16</sup>"Song of the Open Road", *Leaves of Grass, Poetry and Prose*, p. 298.

17The quotation is from "Bookmarks", the (New Zealand) *Listener and T. V. Times*, Vol. 132, No. 2707, 7/2/1992, p. 51.

18"The Comedian as the Letter C", *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955), p. 41.

19Kelly's poem appears in *Heather and Fern*, op. cit., p. 163. "Lord Clyde" is in *Castle Gay and Other Poems* Dunedin: Stone and Son, 1912, pp. 197-200. "David Livingstone" is in *Musings in Maoriland*, op. cit., p. 306.

20"Milton" appears on p. 122, and "Shelley" on p. 123 of *Poems*, London, Melbourne, Christchurch: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1908.

21"New Zealand", *Poems*, Wellington: Whitcombe and Tombs [1904], p. 90.

22"The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", *Collected Poems*, London: Faber and Faber, 1974, p. 13.

23"taking tea with the midwife", Murray Edmond and Mary Paul, eds., *The New Poets*, Wellington: Allen and Unwin New Zealand Limited in Association with the Port Nicholson Press, 1987, p. 5.

24"Images", John Press, ed., *A Map of Modern English Verse*, London: Oxford University Press, 1979, p. 47.

25"He Hoha", Ian Wedde and Harvey McQueen eds., *The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse*, Auckland: Penguin Books (N. Z.) Ltd., 1985, p. 491.

26Fairburn to de Montalk, 6/8/1926, Auckland University Library.

27"The Magpies", op cit., p. 213.

28"Sad Aunt Madge", *The Mersey Sound*, London: Penguin Modern Poets, X, 1967, p. 74.

29"The Mythmaker's Office", *Snowman Snowman : Fables and Fantasies*, New York: George Braziller, 1962, p. 30.

30"What happens in Shakzpeare", *The Penguin Book of New Zealand Verse*, 1980, op. cit., p. 462.

31Baughan continues this innovation into her prose sketches in *Brown Bread from a Colonial Oven* (Christchurch: Whitcombe and Tombs, [1912]). In "Grandmother Speaks", the old woman, recalling the early days when tobacco supplies sometimes ran out and desperate smokers tried to make substitutes from various types of ground-up bark, says, "about as good company as a teethin' baby, is a baccy-lovin' man without his pipe" (p. 22). The dramatic effect on colonials' lives when the first steamer began servicing the isolated communities around the Bay (vaguely, Banks Peninsula) is expressed, "that made more difference to the Bay than anythin', I do believe; for it hook-an-eye'd the Bay folk an' the world" (p. 30). In "Red and Yellow and Ripe", homesick Mrs Nye, in her first year here, describes the colony as "about as meller as a new potato, an' with all its months hupside down" (p. 45). The drab local landscape is like "sister-law Marthys mutton 'ash, what never 'ad no pepper, nor no onion" (p. 148). In "*Cafe au Lait*", old Nanette, recently arrived from a French canton in Switzerland, makes memorable comment on the local cuisine: "one eats, one is fed, it is true; but that is not to say one has dined. The very stomach is in exile in this land" (p. 93).

<sup>32</sup>In his novel *Meg* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), for instance, Beth Neely is "apples, peaches . . . roast beef and red wine" for Fergus, compared to her "thin gruel", a "feast" for a man who "had not had a bite - well, no more than a nibble" (p. 21).

<sup>33</sup>"From Wystan to Carlos", *In the Glass Case*, op. cit., p. 152.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>35</sup>The quotation is from Adcock's comment prefacing the selection of her poems in *Recent Poetry in New Zealand*, ed. Charles Doyle (Auckland: Collins, 1965 [p. 17]).

<sup>36</sup>Letter to Miss Higgins 11/8/1909.

<sup>37</sup>For instance, Adcock writes, ". . . Occasionally I have found myself so annoyed at being strapped against my will into such a straight-jacket that I have abandoned an almost completed poem and rewritten the substance of it in dead-pan prose . . . ." Baughan explains her use of a prose version and advises Andersen to "prosify" his ideas first, in a letter dated 6/5/1908 (J. C. Andersen Papers, Auckland Institute and Museum Library).

<sup>38</sup>Richard Pinfold. See f.n. 18, p. 154.

<sup>39</sup>Stead. op. cit. p. 146.

<sup>40</sup>Baughan cannot be claimed to be one of the many writers, who, according to Curnow, felt themselves to be "interlopers on an indifferent or hostile scene" (*A Book of New Zealand Verse 1923-45*, p. 52). Baughan's new colonial archetype, Thor Rayden, was "Here sent . . . to this rough and raw prospect . . . assign'd".

<sup>41</sup>For instance, Baughan's attitude does not fit with Holcroft's vision of New Zealand, as promoted in "The Deepening Stream" which has been described as showing the country as "an isolated, sea-surrounded rock covered with bush and forest, as an unavoidable, brooding presence, something enormously solid and at times threatening" (Patrick Evans, *The Penguin History of New Zealand Literature*), p. 93.

<sup>42</sup>The quotation is from Curnow's poem, "The Skeleton of the Great Moa in the Canterbury Museum, Christchurch", *Sailing or Drowning* (1943), *Allen Curnow Collected Poems* Penguin Books (N Z) Ltd, 1982, p. 77.

<sup>43</sup>W. S. Broughton explains Mason's position in New Zealand thus:

He seems to be a poet of the human condition rather than a poet concerned with questions of national identity, which makes it the more curious that a literature so self-confessedly concerned with these questions should see in his work the origins of the native tradition. The answer to this apparent paradox lies, it seems, in the fact that . . . he was able to establish, with his verse, two salient facts which future poets could accept. These were that poetry of quality could be written in New Zealand - notwithstanding the indebtedness of Mason's forms to the models of English verse - at the same time - and that it was worth "taking poetry seriously". The association here, as Curnow showed [in *A Book of New Zealand Verse*, Introduction, Part Five (1951 edn.), pp. 24 ff.] must be between Cresswell and Mason, as the first to declare this principle, either implicitly or explicitly (Ph. D. Thesis, op. cit., pp. 298-9).

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### Primary Source References.

- (i) Books (p. 235).
- (ii) Letters (pp. 236 - 238).

### Secondary Source References.

- (i) Letters To The Writer (annotated where appropriate, pp. 238 - 239).
- (ii) Letters to Baughan from Vedanta Swami (p. 239).
- (iii) Interviews: bibliographic reference (p. 240).
- (iv) Newspapers Cited (annotated, where appropriate, pp. 240 - 241).
- (v) Periodicals Cited (annotated, where appropriate , pp. 241 - 243).
- (vi) Books (pp. 243 - 252).
- (vii) References Concerning Idealism (p. 252).

#### (i) Books.

- Baughan, B. E. *Brown Bread from a Colonial Oven*. London: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1912.
- Baughan, B. E. *Glimpses of New Zealand Scenery*. Christchurch: Whitcombe and Tombs, [1922].
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(ii) Letters:

**Auckland Institute and Museum. Johannes C. Andersen. Letters to him ca. 1905-46. Originals:**

Baughan, B. E. to Andersen . . . (Chorlton) 6/5/1908. [Baughan discusses aspects of poetry writing and the relationship between poetry and philosophy. She comments on her recently published *Shingle-Short*].

Baughan, B. E. to Andersen . . . (Chorlton) 9/8/1908. [Baughan thanks Andersen for his criticism of *Shingle-Short* and she explains the biographical provenance of her character Shingle-short. Baughan explains her decision, along with Jessie Mackay, to boycott newspapers who refuse payment for printed contributions from local writers. She comments on Andersen's unfavorable review for his poetry volume, *The Lamp of Psyche*].

Baughan, B. E. to Andersen . . . (Clifton) 30/12/1917. [Baughan assures Andersen that there is no substance to the rumour that she may leave New Zealand].

Baughan, B. E. to Andersen . . . (Akaroa) 18/12/n.d. [Baughan includes her (unpublished) poem "In Akaroa". She mentions that she has had a strenuous time doing [voluntary] nursing [during the great Influenza epidemic].

Baughan, B. E. to Andersen . . . (Clifton) 31/3/1920. [In lyrical mode, Baughan writes on the fine autumn view from her window. She quotes Keats: "Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness". She signs off, "Yours as ever, Betty"]].

Baughan, B. E. to Andersen . . . (Clifton) 18/8/1920. [Again in lyrical mode. The letter ends: "Purity, purity, that is His special revelation on a frosty morning - purity in in the birds' notes, in the air, the light, the ice, and the desires of the human heart that here receives Him! O for as clear a cleanness of thought, of understanding, of heart, of soul, of imagination, or spirit! O to see better, understand more truly, to help sweeten, illuminate, cheer: to reveal the hidden Beauty! O Light, within and without, be Lord!" Baughan signs off, "Ever thine. B."].

Baughan, B. E. to Andersen . . . ("Ashrama", Akaroa), 12/2/1931. [Baughan asks, on behalf of a friend, the "pecuniary value" of a first edition of Froude's *Oceana*. She asks also: "who is Quentin Pope? & why does he re-print poems without asking leave of them who hold the copyright ?"]

**Alexander Turnbull Library: MS. Papers 717. Baughan Collection, Folder 1:**

Baughan, B. E. to Berta Burns ("March") . . . (Akaroa), 12/10/1956. [Baughan reminds "March" that "Rosy" (M.S. *Two New Zealand Roses*) is hers (Burns') to do with as she wishes].

Baughan, B. E. to Miss Higgins . . . (Chorlton), 8/4/1908. [Baughan thanks Higgins for sending a copy of the *Bacchae*, and enthuses over "the wonderful choruses". She claims to set little store by *Shingle-Short*, but admits to some fondness for the "name piece" and for the song of the cabbage tree].

Baughan, B. E. to Miss Higgins . . . (C/o Bank of Australasia) Christchurch, 11/8/1909. [Baughan writes that she has been ill with bronchitis for over two months. She discusses the "artificial" forms of verse, and comments: "If one must write either Rondels or Whitmanic chants, give me the latter! but, for choice, something some-where in between". She comments on Bernard O'Dowd's *Poets Militant*, and on Lloyd George's Finance Bill].

Baughan, B. E. to Miss Higgins . . . (Chorlton), 21/2/1910. [Baughan hopes her young Australian correspondent will enjoy her time at London University. She wonders if Miss Higgins will be annoyed by the formality of the English, and she makes the observation, "I find myself now that English people are less formal to those who come from the Colonies - they make allowances for us !!!"]

(The letters to Miss Higgins were copied from the originals in the National Library of Australia, Canberra).

Baughan, B. E. to Mr Kinsey (Clifton), 6/3/1913. [Baughan thanks Kinsey for setting her poem ("The Conquerors", previously unpublished) "in so enchanting a form"].

Baughan, B. E. to W. F. Alexander (Clifton), 2/8/1913. [Baughan writes that she is glad her work pleases him. In answer (apparently) to his question, "Are you a New Zealand writer?", she replies: "I wish that I had been born in New Zealand, so you can imagine if I am willing to be called a N. Z. writer!" She thanks him for recommending that she write to Mr J. Cowan for advice [on the Maori aspects of Hine's soliloquy] and adds that Cowan gave her just the help she wanted].

Baughan, B. E. to W. F. Alexander (Akaroa), 20/3/1937. (W. F. Alexander M. S. Papers 423: Folder 1). [Baughan thanks Alexander for his kind message and letter and corrects his impression that she "sacrificed Poetry to Prisoners". She discusses the concept of "Beauty", and writes that she has remained "deeply at one with Shelley, Plato, & whoever wrote the Upanishads". Baughan claims to have "lost the use of words", and that

they now seem a clumsy method of communication. She discusses her book *People in Prison* (Unicorn Press, 1936) and her attitude to prisoners].

Baughan, B. E. to Sir Joseph [Kinsey] (Akaroa), 19/3/1934. [Baughan discusses her books on New Zealand scenery. She comments on her present attitude to writing and to books]. (Kinsey M. S. Papers 22: Folder 35).

Baughan, B. E. to F. A. de la Mare. Several folders of correspondence, (M. S. Papers 144) [Baughan discusses her social work and her book, *People in Prison*].

Baughan, B. E. to Lincoln Efford, (Lincoln Efford Papers, M. S. 445: Folder 1, WTU). [These concentrate on Baughan's and Efford's work in connection with the Howard League for Penal Reform].

### University of Canterbury Library.

Baughan, B. E. to Ursula Bethell . . . ("Asharama"), 11/4/35. [This short letter takes the form of an emotional prayer, apparently written in sympathy for some personal sorrow].

Baughan, B. E. to Ursula Bethell . . . (Akaroa) 31/12/1936. [Baughan writes to console "Abbe" for the death of her close friend (Effie Pollen). She expounds on her personal philosophy for coping with grief. She thanks Bethell for sending a copy of her "precious book"(*Time and Place*)].

Baughan, B. E. to Ursula Bethell . . . (Akaroa) 9/3/1937. [Baughan Discusses "Autumn Afternoon". She comments on Penal reforms in the United States].

Baughan, B. E. to Ursula Bethell . . . (Akaroa) 15/3/1939. [Again Baughan is attempting to help Bethell come to terms with her grief. She advises that "Abbe" offer her love with thanksgiving back to the Divine Source].

Ursula Bethell ("Abbe"), to "Miss Baughan" (In the writer's possession), (St. Faith's, Webb Street, Christchurch), 20/12/1936. [Bethell begins, "You are one of those I feel should have my "Time & Place" - you saw the Robin [Effie Pollen] - will you please take it as from us both? I have often thought of your sense of her living-ness - alas, I can only feel that she is not here . . . Bethell claims to be much better in health, but is plainly depressed, remarking that it "doesn't seem to matter now where I am, with no object in life"].

### Secondary Source References.

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Letter from Peter Alcock, Department of English, Massey University (17/3/1986) [clarifying details and minor inaccuracies in the document by Berta Burns, allegedly [in Burns' words], "as told to Peter Alcock" (WTu 2/9/16.4.84)].

Letter from the Duke of Bedford, (12/7/1986), 8, *Quai d'Orleans*, 75004 Paris. [His Grace has no record of Baughan's existence. He explains that after the death of her husband, Duchess Adeline lived at Woodside House in Chemies, Buckinghamshire, and wonders if Miss Baughan lived nearby].

Letter from Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, University of London, Elizabeth Bennett, archivist (12/6/1986). [A useful document, setting out Baughan's academic achievements, and prizes won, during her undergraduate days at the college].

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Letter from Scott Craw, Chorlton, Duvauchelle (21/10/1985) [explains the relationship between various residents in the region who were known to Baughan].

Letter from Mrs Aylmer Newton, Spreydon, Christchurch (6/1/1986) [contains anecdotes relating to Baughan, and instances of her assistance to others].

Letter from Mrs Betty Phillips, Akaroa (14/4/1986). [Mrs Phillips, a near neighbour, tells how on the morning of the day she died, Baughan recounted her life story, from girlhood, to her work in prison reform, and explained the background to her lifelong friendship with Berta Burns].

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**(ii) Letters to Baughan from Vedanta Swami: (B. E. Baughan Papers MS. Papers 198, WTu).**

Letter from R. Tagore, Bengal (7/3/1914) [discusses the ideals one should follow through life].

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Letter from "Swami", San Francisco (8/6/1917) [discusses the beliefs of the Hindu Temple, San Francisco].



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### (iii) Interviews.

(a) Mrs Gwen Goodwin (p. 253); (b) Mrs Betty Waller (p. 256); (c) Mrs M. A. Skey (p. 261).

### (iv) Newspapers Cited.

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The *Sydney Bulletin*, 4/6/1908. ["The Red Page" contains a review of *Shingle-Short*].

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The *Wellington Dominion*, 16/ 5/1908. "Books and Authors", p. 12 [review of *Shingle-Short*, concentrating mostly on the title poem].

The *Wellington Dominion*, 22/1/1910. "Books and Authors", p.9 [contains a review of Jessie Mackay's *Land of the Morning* , comparing it with Baughan's *Shingle-Short*].

The *Lyttelton Times*, 8/2/1902, "About Books", p. 4 [contains a review of A. A. Grace's "Tales of a Dying Race". This is the first of an intermittent series of enthusiastic reviews of New Zealand-oriented writing, by the editor, Mr S. Saunders. He was a significant facilitator of Baughan's writing career. It was Saunders who introduced Baughan to other local writers, including Jessie Mackay and J. C. Andersen (See The *New Zealand Listener*, 12/9/1958, p. 5)].

The *Lyttelton Times*, 5/4/1902, "About Books"p. 4 [review of Henry Lawson's *Joe Wilson and his Mates*].

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The *Lyttelton Times*, 9/5/1908, "Books and Bookmen", p.18 [includes Baughan's review of a New Zealand novel, *She Loved Much*, by Alfred Buchanan].

The *Lyttelton Times*, 16/5/1908, "Books and Bookmen", p. 6 [reviews *Shingle-Short*].

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The *Christchurch Press*, 22/8/1958, p. 49 [contains an obituary column, headed "Miss B. E. Baughan", outlining her achievements].

The *Christchurch Weekly Press*, Christmas issue, 1907 [features in Baughan's letter to J. C. Andersen, 9/8/1908 (Andersen Papers, Auckland Institute and Museum Library)].

The *Otago Witness*, 24/10/1906, p. 69, 31/10/1906, p. 69, and 7/11/1906, p.85 [contains articles by Jessie Mackay:"Two Poets of the Peoples' cause", contrasting Walt Whitman and Bernard O'Dowd].

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The *English Academy*. The issue of 9/7/1898 p. 28 [contains a brief review of "Mr" Baughan's earliest volume *Verses*].

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The *Australian Bookfellow* (Superseded by *Australia*). [According to the preface of *Shingle-Short*, Baughan has poems printed in both these magazines. The relevant issues are not available in New Zealand].

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The *New Zealand Woman's Weekly*, 21/11/1935. , p.17. [In the article "New Zealand Champion of Penal Reform", "K. J. M." outlines Baughan's social work in New Zealand].

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## APPENDIX.

### Interviews:

- (a) Mrs Gwen Goodwin (p. 253).
- (b) Mrs Betty Waller (p. 256).
- (c) Mrs M. A. Skey. (p. 261).

#### (a) Interview with Mrs Gwen Goodwin, Redcliffs, Sumner, 12 /11/1985.

*Mrs Goodwin's parents, Dr and Mrs Fenwick had been close friends of Blanche Baughan and with Dr and Mrs Brownlie who were Baughan's neighbours when she lived at "High Up" at Clifton, Sumner between the years 1910-29. I first asked Mrs Goodwin for her earliest memories of "Aunt Betty", as she called her.*

The cupboard. "Aunt Betty" kept a cupboard full of trinkets and souvenirs from her world travels. These little bears [she showed three little bear figurines, each about three centimetres high, each playing a musical instrument] were my selection from "Aunt Betty's" cupboard. She was very fond of children, and we adored her. Each of her honorary nephews and nieces were given something from the cupboard.

*How did your parents come to know B.E.B. ?*

Father was her doctor. She had a recurring throat problem, as I recall. But I never saw her depressed. She was very lively - I would say vivacious. She had a magnetic personality. She was quite eccentric in some ways.

*In what ways?*

Well - she simply ignored convention. I remember when I was a young girl, accompanying "Aunt Betty" down Gloucester Street [Christchurch] when I noticed the end of a pyjama striped trouser leg hanging down to her shoes. When I pointed it out - being embarrassed speechless - all B. E. B. said was , 'Oh that! I always put pyjamas under my frock if I am going out over-night - it saves me carrying a bag'. She just rolled the offending pyjama-leg up - and continued on, completely unfazed! She used to stay over at our place sometimes - and on those occasions she'd arrive with a sleeping-bag - that was considered 'way out' at the time - only rough-living bush workers used sleeping-bags.

*Was she involved in the social or literary life of the region?*

Yes. She used to hold "conversaziones" at her residence. I think she knew just about everyone who was doing anything interesting. Writers. Councillors.

*Can you remember any names, specifically?*

. . . There were the Miss Cabots - and Catherine and Johannes Anderson. She was a great admirer of eccentric people or people against the system . . .like Professor Bickerton - who was considered somewhat shocking and unconventional in those days. She knew Jessie Mackay too and the leaders of the women's movement . . . and Mr Cockayne, the botanist.

*Tell me about Baughan's "Conversaziones". What took place?*

I was only a child at the time - but they were lively evenings: discussions . . . politics . . . acting . . . books. There were poetry readings which I mainly remember because we children would be shoo'd out of the room if they got on to someone "unsuitable for children" . . . Whitlam ? (sic) would it be?

*[I suggested 'Whitman']*

Yes! That's the one. I remember we children listening outside the door to find out why it was banned - but we never did find out. . . On another occasion they held a seance. I don't think they took it seriously - there was a lot of giggling - I think old Professor Bickerton was there . . . there was a lot of interest in psychic phenomena in those days. I think the Andersens were very interested in it at the time . . . "Aunt Betty" did a lot of social work in the district too.

*Such as?*

Anyone needing help or cheering up - "Aunt Betty" would set off with her collie dog and her bunch of flowers . . . Later . . . during the 'flu' epidemic she did voluntary nursing all over the peninsula. Later she concentrated on work with prisoners - mostly after the First World War. - but you should see her book "People in Prison" - about that. I think she became a good friend of Lincoln Efford in Christchurch who helped her with the prison reform work.

*The above interview by N. M. Harris. Answers dictated by Mrs Gwen Goodwin, Redcliffs, Ch. Ch. 12 11/1985 [Signed N. M. Harris. (Mrs) Gwen Goodwin].*



**(b) Interview with Mrs Betty Waller, of Rugby Street, Christchurch,  
19/10/1985.**

*Betty Waller was a regular visitor to "Ashrama" [Baughan's Akaroa home] from about 1930 on. I asked what her impressions were of B.E.B.*

She was an extraordinary person. Very strong minded. A real battler for any cause she believed in. And very spiritually aware, too, I'd say. She helped a lot of people in the district in many different ways. . . She paid the fare back to Britain for a young chap who'd got into trouble . . an ex-prisoner - to give him a new start. She looked after the sick and all that sort of thing. She helped us out (my husband Bob and I) with a big interest-free loan just when we needed it - but there must be dozens who would tell a similar story.

*Did she ever talk about her early life, in England?*

Yes. Bits and pieces. She used to talk about the horrors of the conditions of some of the slums around London. And about campaigning for the Suffragettes . . . and about some of the capers they [the London University women students] got up to to try to get things changed for women. [Mrs Waller showed me the cutting from the *Spectator* about one such demonstration Baughan had taken part in]. I remember her talking about Mr Ruskin - the famous one. She knew him personally - but I wouldn't like to say how well. She used to stay in the Lake District at times. I think that is where she got to know him. He would have been quite old then - but apparently that didn't stop him doing a lot of talking - and walking. I think

she taught Greek to some Duchess or other [of Bedford] . I think it was after she [the Duchess] had become widowed.

*What do you remember of "Ashrama"?*

Her house? I believe the name is Hindu for "the Haven". And that's how she saw it . . . and used it - as a haven for whoever needed shelter. Some of the people about were quite concerned for her safety considering the shady-looking characters she sometimes gave shelter to. Some of them seemed a bit odd - but Miss Baughan could always find a good side. One saying of hers I do remember, because I heard it many times - 'beauty's as undeniable as pain in this world' - which I think she got from some matron of a hospital she worked in in London. Another thing she was always saying - 'New times, new solutions' - she was always having to change things - prison conditions - council regulations - you name it . . . She had a piano there, [at 'Ashrama' - Mrs Waller has returned to my question again] and could play and sing quite sweetly. There was a big open fire . . . lots of books . . . philosophy or devotional mostly, and literature. She left me some of them. I have to confess I've never read most of them - but you might like to look at them.\* There was a splendid view of the harbour from the upstairs window. But there were no luxuries . . . It was fairly basic. The garden was memorable . . . Untamed - but it seemed to be just right for her - irrepressible.

(\* The books appear to be quite significant. They include two books on Hegel (J. M. E. MacTaggart's *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology* (Cambridge University Press, 1901) and *The Wisdom and Religion of a German Philosopher: being selections from the writings of G. W. F. Hegel*. Collected and edited by E. S. Haldane (London: Kegan Paul, 1987). There is an 1887 edition of Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* (London: Walter Scott), an

undated copy of *Emerson's Essays and Representative Men* (London and Glasgow: Collins' [1905 (?)]).

*Did she ever speak to you about her own creative writing? Her poetry?*

She told me that she once tried to be a poet. . . but that her 'poetic vision' simply left her . . . and that this had been a big blow at the time - but she used to describe her life - she was always busy - as 'living poetry instead of writing it'. But she was fond of other poets' work - especially Ursula Bethell's. I remember she was thrilled when Miss Bethell sent her a copy of her *Time and Place* - I called on Miss Baughan - and found her declaiming . . . ['The Long Harbour' \* ] aloud from her balcony window! There were several other poems she liked to quote from . . . ["Nunc Dimittus" \* ] and ["At the lighting of the lamps" \* ] - are the only ones I can think of . . . and ["Autumn Afternoon" \* ].

( \* Mrs Waller recalled odd scraps from these poems, I supplied the titles).

*How well did she know Ursula Bethell?*

Quite well, although they were completely opposite in temperament. Miss Baughan called Ursula 'Abbe' or 'Friend' - but Ursula called her 'Miss Baughan'. She was far more formal and 'correct' than B. E. B. - but Ursula Bethell could indulge in light-hearted foolery too, especially with her friend Effie Pollen. I remember we visited them a few times at Rise Cottage and she made great fun out of the way Effie pronounced - or mispronounced words - and was always finding amusement in her friend's saying or doings. They

seemed to be absolutely dotty over each other. Ena Ower [a friend from Akaroa] might know more about Ursula and Effie.

The other thing that impressed me about B. E. B. was the way she never flaunted her education - most of the people she dealt with - at least the less well educated - would not have known that she had a good university education, or that she had a huge general knowledge or that she could speak several foreign languages. She went to a finishing school, too, in Switzerland. There may have been some scandal to do with that. I know she was brought back home halfway through the term - but I forget the details . . . There was something - some connection, I think, to a circus - a bear-trainer came into it somewhere - and my little bears [ she showed me several little performing bear figurines, not unlike Mrs Goodwin's] were supposed to be souvenirs of the incident . . . anyway - as I was saying, she always put others on the same level - she was concerned for ordinary people - she had no time for snobbery whatever - said she'd seen too much of that in England.

*Did B. E. B. ever speak of her 'mystic experiences?'*

Yes. They had a profound effect on her. I'm not sure precisely what she did believe in - she certainly wasn't an orthodox - or any sort of Christian. She believed in 'being true to the inner light'. Whatever she believed she had a great sense of everything being one - and she used to say that that her 'mystic experiences' convinced her that Herr Hegel was right. Don't ask me to explain what she meant by that. She *tried* - on more than one occasion - but it was very complicated and it didn't sink in - but I think her idea that everything was one thing made it easy for her to see some of her really bad criminal friends - or 'ex' criminals - as made of the same material as she was - she saw

herself as one with them - not better, not worse. I think that idea was behind everything she did.

*(Signed N. M. Harris. Betty Waller. 19 /10 /1985 )*

**(c) Interview with Mrs M. A. Skey, at 'Woodchester', Banks Avenue, Christchurch, 9/11/1985.**

*Mrs Skey was born in 1895. Her mother knew 'B.E.B.' well. I asked Mrs Skey what her earliest memory of Blanche Baughan was.*

I must have been about ten or thereabouts. My mother took me to visit 'Aunt Betty' as we children called her, at the place she was staying at Chorlton. Miss Baughan was holding one of her social evenings - there were poetry readings and singing around the piano, and they put on some acted sketches. There were maybe a dozen or so people there.

*Can you remember the names of any of the guests?*

Not the names. Except the local teacher, Miss Duncan. I had friends at Chorlton school, and she [Miss Duncan] was a friend of my mother too. I remember there were some German people there and Miss Baughan could speak German to them - I remember that clearly - because one of them brought along a parrot that babbled away in German - well it was supposed to be German, but I wouldn't know. I remember everybody laughing at it - they called the parrot 'Herr Hegel'. I remember her telling me about the German governess that she had when she was a little girl. She used to mimic her way of talking, which was very funny. She used to take off her Scottish governess too, which used to amuse us children. Probably because she could speak German the story got about - later - at the beginning of the First World War - that 'Aunt Betty' was in league with the enemy - that was supposed to be her motive for moving to 'High Up' [as Baughan named her cottage] in

Redcliffs. It was just nonsense, of course, but there was a lot of suspicion about at the time.

*Do you have any other memories of Miss Baughan - say, pre-First World War ?*

Yes. She was a great walker or tramper - I remember tramping over the hills on the Peninsula [Bank's] with 'Aunt Betty' and a few others - collecting plant specimens. There was a Mr Laing with us - he was quite a well-known botanist, I think.

*Any other memories? - her house at Redcliffs, for instance?*

Not clearly . . . but I remember she had a side-board full of little souvenirs and things from her travels. I was fascinated by the cupboard and the stories. All 'her' children were allowed to choose something to keep from the cupboard.

. . . I remember being taken with 'Aunt Betty' to visit an old Maori woman on the Peninsula - can't remember exactly where - but 'Aunt Betty' used to take her a supply of vegetables in return for getting lessons in Maori and stories about the early days on the Peninsula - and I can still remember the old lady's stories about the tribe being slaughtered by Te Rauparaha.

I remember sometimes being taken along with 'Aunt Betty' to visit sick or old people - and 'Aunt Betty' used to make up little bouquets to take along on such occasions. . . . Miss Baughan was a very lively person. She had a very nice speaking voice - I think you would say a cultured voice - and I especially remember her lovely silvery laugh.

I don't think I can tell you anything else about the early days . . . I visited her on several occasions when she was living in Akaroa - she had some young ex-prisoners staying with her at the time, as well as her good friend Berta Burns. On other occasions when I visited 'Ashrama' there were others there - a new turnover of young people in trouble, mostly. I went along to some of her lectures on Vedantic thought [in Christchurch] which she became very much involved with.

*(signed N. M. Harris. M. A. Skey, 'Woodchester', 9 /11/1985)*